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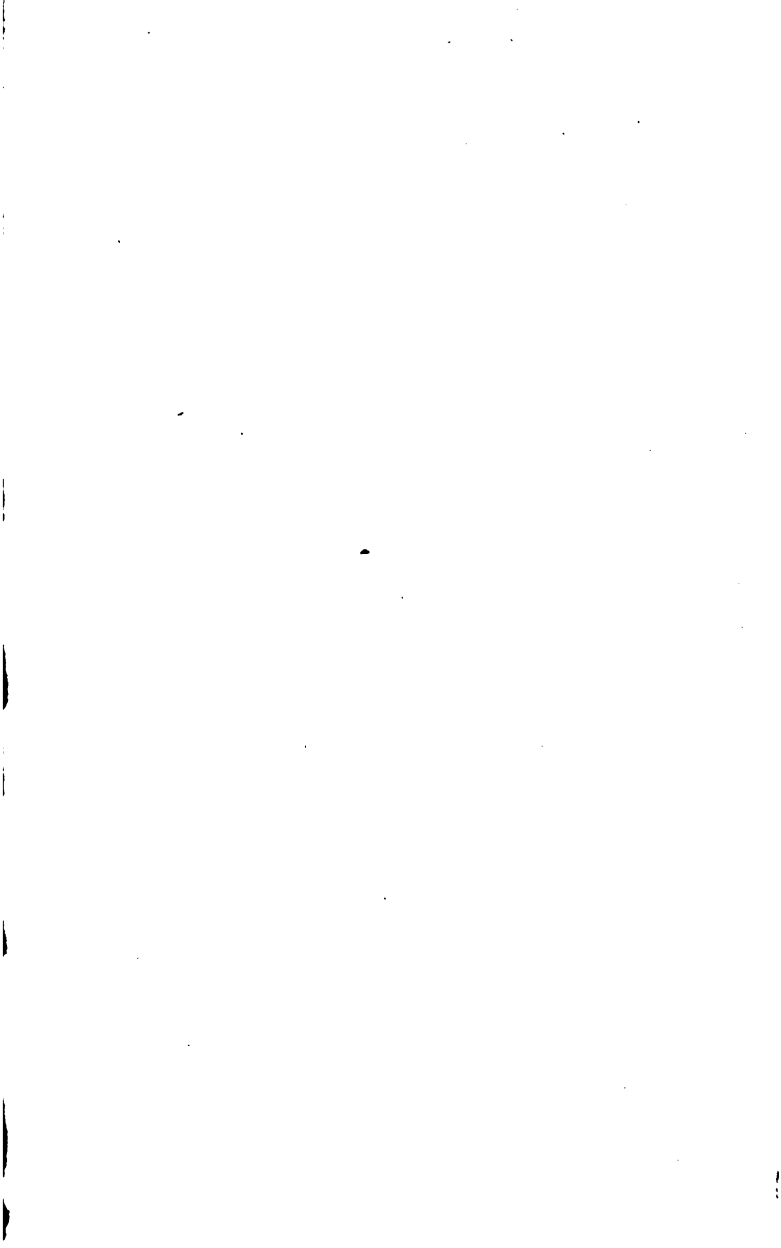
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Pocket Series.

NOTES

ON THE

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSONS

FOR 1883.

BY

REV. R. R. MEREDITH, D.D.

Part Three.

JULY TO SEPTEMBER.

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ORDER OF SERVICE.

(The School being in order.)

I. INVOCATION.

Supt. The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.

Teachers. God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Scholars. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.

All. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

(All heads bowed.)

SILENT PRAYER *(about a minute, followed by)* THE LORD'S PRAYER *(in concert)*.

II. PRAISE.

(The School will rise.)

Supt. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

Teachers. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

Scholars. While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

All. Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

THE OPENING HYMN.

III. CONFESSION.

Supt. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Teachers. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

Scholars. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

All. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

THE APOSTLES' CREED *(in concert)*.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by

the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

(The School will be seated.)

IV. SUPPLICATION.

Supt. O Lord, show thy mercy upon us.

School. And grant us thy salvation.

Supt. O God, make clean our hearts within us.

School. And take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

(All heads bowed.)

PRAYER.

SELECTED HYMN.

V. INSTRUCTION.

THE LESSON READ *(responsively)*.
THE LESSON STUDIED.

THE LESSON CLOSED *(warning bell, five minutes before closing; closing bell, followed by silence)*.

THE LESSON HYMN.

THE LESSON REVIEWED *(by the Pastor or Superintendent)*.

VI. DISMISSION.

REPORTS AND NOTICES.

(The School will rise.)

CLOSING HYMN.

Supt. O Lord, thy testimonials are wonderful.

Teachers. Therefore doth my soul keep them.

Scholars. Look thou upon me, and be merciful to me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

All. Order my steps in thy word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Supt. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

CLOSING CHANT.

THE BOOKS OF THE QUARTER.

JOSHUA.

The subject-matter of this book is the fulfilment of the work which was given to Moses to do, but which had been left unfinished by him, owing to that sin which brought after it the judgment on him and his brother Aaron. It may be divided into three parts: I. The conquest of the land, ch. i. - xii; though, as a matter of arrangement, if one preferred it, the earlier chapters might be placed separately as an introduction, with the history of the crossing of the Jordan and the restoration of the people to the full enjoyment of their privileges as the professing church of God. II. The allotment made of the land to the tribes, including along with this the appointment of the cities of refuge, and the provision of cities for the Levites, ch. xiii. - xxi. Perhaps ch. xxii. may be regarded as an appendix to this — the dismissal of the eastern tribes to their homes, and the jealousy for purity of worship; otherwise it might be classed with the two chapters which follow. III. The jealousy of Joshua for the godliness and obedience of the people, which involved their future welfare; and a few closing verses which tell of the death of him and his companions and fellow-workers, ch. xxiii. - xxiv. The period embraced by the history, excepting these last two chapters (which may refer to a time fifteen or twenty years later), was seven years of war, and whatever time was occupied in the division of the land, we are not told how much. If the question be asked, Who wrote the book of Joshua? we have no means of giving a direct reply. If any one affirms that Joshua was himself the writer (with the manifest exception of the account of his own death, etc., in the closing verses), I do not see any valid evidence to the contrary. And I know nothing more natural than to suppose that if Joshua did not write the book with his own hand, it was composed from his papers by some who were about him. — *Principal Douglass.*

JUDGES.

The Book of Judges gives the history of the people of God from the time that they had been settled by Joshua in the land of Canaan, until the increasing disorders in the Hebrew commonwealth called for changes in the constitution, whose introduction is narrated in the books of Samuel. The materials are scanty indeed out of which to construct a reply to the questions, At what time was the book written? and, Who was its author? Whatever hypothesis may be preferred as to the authorship and date of composition, most readers will be impressed by the naturalness of the

writing, as if by one with a full and accurate knowledge of the fact which he relates. It is supposed by some that he made a compilation, at one time from copious materials, at another from a dry, brief chronicle. I believe, on the contrary, that in this, as in other historical books, the copiousness and the brevity are due to the intention of the writers, whose plan was not to write an ordinary history, but to furnish a view of the progress of the kingdom of God on earth, or, as it is sometimes called, a theocratic history. The chronology of the book is very difficult, and the questions connected with it may require more light to be thrown upon them than we can furnish. In the meantime it is sufficient to present the following table of servitudes to the heathen and deliverance by the Judges :—

	Years.
I. <i>Servitude</i> .—Chushan Rishathaim, of Mesopotamia	8 }
1. Judge Othniel	40 }
II. <i>Servitude</i> .—Eglon, of Moab; Ammon, Amalek	18 }
2. Judge Ehud	80 }
3. Judge Shamgar	20 }
III. <i>Servitude</i> .—Jabin, of Hazor, within Canaan	40 }
4. Judge Deborah	7 }
5. Judge Barak	40 }
IV. <i>Servitude</i> .—Midian, Amalek, and children of the East	7 }
6. Judge Gideon	40 }
<i>Tyrant</i> (= servitude) Abimelech	3 }
7. Judge Tola	23 }
8. Judge Jair	22 }
V. <i>Servitude</i> .—Ammonites with Philistines	18 }
9. Judge Jephthah	6 }
10. Judge Ibzan	7 }
11. Judge Elon	10 }
12. Judge Abdon	8 }
VI. <i>Servitude</i> .—Philistines	40 }
13. Judge Samson ("In the days of the Philistines," 20 years)	40 }
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—*Principal Douglass.*

RUTH.

This book, together with the concluding chapters of Judges, is supplementary to that book, containing, as it does, a domestic narrative, which refers to the period when the Judges ruled. Usher, in his Chronology, which is followed in our authorized translation, assigns it to that period of national suffering which preceded the appearance of Gideon. In the general opinion, both of Jews and Christians, it was composed by Samuel. The story detailed in the book is extremely interesting. In the words of Thomas Fuller, "the first chapter sheweth that 'many are the troubles of the righteous,' the three last do show that 'God delivereth them out of all.'"

THE BOOK OF SAMUEL.

The two books of Samuel, like the two books of Kings, originally formed an undivided whole. The Septuagint translators, regarding the Book of Samuel and the Book of Kings as a complete History of the Kingdom from its foundation to its fall, divided the work into four books, which they styled *Books of the Kingdoms*.

The title Samuel does not denote authorship, but like the titles Joshua, Ruth, and Esther, commemorates the prominent actor in the events recorded in the book. Its adoption shows a true insight into the connection of the history it contains. It stands as a monument of the greatness of the Prophet who was Jehovah's instrument for establishing the kingdom of Israel, and guiding the chosen people through a crisis in its history second in importance only to the Exdous. The book begins with an account of his birth : and his direct influence extends to the close of it, in the reign of the king whom he anointed as Jehovah's choice.

A late Jewish tradition ascribes the authorship to Samuel himself. This obviously could only apply to the first twenty-four chapters of the First Book, and as the work forms a connected whole, it is improbable that these in their present form proceeded from his pen. It is generally agreed that the book is a *compilation* from different sources, but who was the compiler there is no evidence to show.

The Canonicity of the book has never been questioned. Its acceptance in the Christian Church rests upon the fact that it formed an integral part of those Jewish Scriptures which were received by our Lord and His Apostles as "given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Our Lord appealed to one of the narratives contained in it as teaching the great principle that the ceremonial law must give way to the law of mercy ; the magnificat shows evident familiarity with the song of Hannah. St. Peter, St. Stephen, and St. Paul refer to the history contained in it. — *Rev. A. F. Kirkpatrick.*



STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THIRD QUARTER.

JULY 1, 1883.]

LESSON I.

[JOSHUA 1: 1-9.

JOSHUA, SUCCESSOR TO MOSES.

GOLDEN TEXT. — “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” — Eph. 6: 10.

TIME. — B.C. 1451. **PLACE.** — The plains of Moab, on the east side of the Jordan, opposite Jericho.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

1. Now after the death of spake unto Joshua the son of Moses the servant of the Lord, Nun, Moses' minister, saying, it came to pass, that the Lord

1. **Now after the death of Moses.** — Heb.: “and it was after,” etc. The statement following is thus connected with some previous one, which is assumed to be known to the reader. So Judges, Ruth, 1 Sam., etc., are by the same means linked on to the books preceding them. The connection here is the closer, since the book of Deuteronomy concludes, and the book of Joshua opens, by referring to the death of Moses. — *Cook*. Joshua having been already appointed and designated leader of Israel (Num. 27: 18-23; Deut. 1: 38; 3: 28), in all probability assumed the reins of government *immediately* after the death of Moses, though no movement towards breaking up the encampment in Shittim was made. — *J. F. & B.* The time referred to at the opening of this book was probably at the conclusion of the thirty days' mourning for Moses, spoken of in Deut. 34: 8; or it might have been during that period. **The servant of the Lord.** — A high and honorable title applied to Moses, not merely in the sense in which it is applied to pious and good men generally, who may justly be styled *servants* of the Most High, inasmuch as it is the grand aim of their lives to *serve* and obey him; but in this connection carrying with it a reference to the peculiar nature of the service in which Moses was employed, viz., that of a minister or vicergerent of God, the honored organ through whom he communicated his will to his chosen people and managed all their varied interests. It is in this character that he stands so highly commended in the sacred volume. — *Bush*. **The Lord spake.** — Whether by a direct communication through his angel, as in 5: 13-15 (see 6: 2), or by the Urim of the high priest, is uncertain, but probably the latter, inasmuch as this manner of speaking is prescribed

2. Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

to him in Num. 27: 21. — *Steele*. **Joshua.** — (See *Exposition*.) **Moses' Minister.** — That is, his official attendant, who from being constantly employed in important services, and early initiated into the principles of the government, must have been well trained for undertaking the leadership of Israel. — *J. F. & B.*

2. **Moses my servant is dead.** — As Joshua was of course aware of the *fact* of Moses' decease these words could not be intended merely to announce to him that event. They are equivalent to saying the death of my servant Moses has left the people without a leader and a head to conduct them into the promised land. It is necessary that his place should be immediately filled. Thou hast been selected for that office, and the time has now come for thee to enter upon the active discharge of its duties. Arise, therefore, and go at once about the work of thy high calling! Probably Joshua's deep sense of his own insufficiency and unworthiness, and of the many dangers and difficulties which encompassed his path, had caused him somewhat to despond and waver in spirit, and rendered necessary this direct and rousing summons, which for the same reason, God was pleased to accompany with so many encouraging promises. — *Bush*. **This Jordan.** — This celebrated river was in full view from the elevation on which the Israelites were encamped. Thus far in Scripture history the Jordan has acquired no special importance. But henceforth, in Jewish and Christian literature, in sacred song and figurative expression of Christian hope, this humble stream occupies a larger place in the world's thinking than the broad Amazon, or the majestic Mississippi. In the poetic language of Tacitus, "The Lebanon nourishes and pours out the Jordan." It flows entire through the first and second lake, and is retained by the third. These lakes (each with a triple name) are the Merom of the Old Testament, called Samochonitis in ancient classics, and Hurleh in modern geography; the second, the Sea of Galilee, or Lake of Gennesaret, called also Tiberias; the third lake is the Dead Sea, called in the Old Testament the Salt Sea and the Sea of the Plain. The river, which in most of its course flows in a deep trench, is at the Dead Sea, thirteen hundred and eight feet below the level of the Mediterranean. The general course of its current is to the south, but the river has a number of sharp bends; which deflect the general flow of its waters. From the rapidity of the flow it may be styled almost a continuous cataract. From the first lake to the second, a distance of less than nine miles, is a descent of six hundred feet, and from the Lake of Tiberias to the Dead Sea are twenty-seven great rapids, besides a great many of less magnitude. The average descent through its whole course is nearly twelve feet in a mile, justifying the name of "The Descender." Its length is about two hundred miles from the roots of Anti-Lebanon, where it bursts forth in all its purity, to the Sea of Salt, where it is lost in a briny, seething caldron. Yet the distance by a straight line between these points is less than ninety miles. There are shallows where it can be forded. It is subject to periodical overflows when the snows of

3. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

4. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the

great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your coast.

5. There shall not any man

Lebanon melt. At these times it overflows the first of the two terraces which constitute its banks. Within its lowest banks it varies in width from seventy feet, where it enters the Sea of Galilee, to one hundred and eighty yards at the Dead Sea. — *Steele*. All this people. — Numbering, according to the last census, 601,730 from twenty years old and upwards. See Num. 26:51. — The land which I do give them. — Canaan, or the Land of Promise; so called because it had been promised to the patriarchs centuries before. — *Steele*.

3. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon. — That is, every place within the limits specified in the ensuing verse. The expression in this, as in innumerable other cases, must be qualified by the connection. — *Bush*. Compare the similar language in Deut. 11:24. The entire land was before them, and their own faith and courage were to decide how much of it they would actually possess. — *Steele*.

4. The wilderness. — "The wilderness" of the text is the Desert of Arabia, which forms the southern, as Lebanon does the northern limit, of the Promised Land. — *Cook*. And this Lebanon. — That is, unto this Lebanon, which was the boundary opposite to that of the wilderness. — *Bush*. Spoken of as "this Lebanon" because visible from the neighborhood in which Israel was encamped, as indeed it is from nearly every part of Palestine. — *Cook*. The great river. . . . Euphrates. — The largest, the longest, and by far the most important of the rivers of Western Asia. Its entire length is about one thousand seven hundred and eighty miles, more than two-thirds of which are navigable for small steam vessels. — *Whitney*. All the land of the Hittites. — The intervening territory is described generally as "all the land of the Hittites." The Hittites are probably the inhabitants of northern Canaan and Phœnicia, but the name appears to be used here for the Canaanites in general, as in 1 Kings 10:29. — *Cook*. The great sea. — The Mediterranean. Your coast. — Your boundaries. These included a larger territory than the Hebrews ever possessed, except for a short time during the reigns of David and Solomon. The breadth from Lebanon on the north to the desert on the south is one hundred and forty miles; the length from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates is about four hundred miles, making an area of fifty-six thousand square miles, equal to the States of New York and Vermont. Canaan proper, or Palestine, was only one hundred and forty miles by forty — an area smaller than the State of New Jersey. Jehovah devised liberal things for his people, but they failed through unbelief and cowardice to come into immediate possession of the munificent gift. — *Steele*.

5. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee. — No man shall be able effectually to withstand thee, to maintain his ground before thee, or to throw any serious obstacle before thy way. Joshua is, however, admonished that his sufficiency was not of himself. — *Bush*.

be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

6. Be strong and of good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

7. Only be thou strong and

very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

8. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,

The narrative labors to impress upon us the sense that the continuity of the nation and of its high purpose was not broken by the change of person and situation. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."—*Stanley*.

6. **Be strong and of a good courage.**—*Be strong and firm.* We prefer this rendering since the words, as J. H. Michaelis has noted, signify not firmness and strength in general, but strength in the hands and firmness in the knees. (Isa. 35:3; Comp. Heb. 12:12, 13). Joshua must lay hold boldly and with a strong hand, and then when he has done so, allow nothing to drive him from his position.—*Fay*. The expression occurs with increasing emphasis four times in this chapter, and is rather a command than an exhortation.—*Steele*.

7. **Only be thou strong and very courageous.**—*Be strong therefore, and play the man to the uttermost.*—*Clarke*. The Hebrew term here employed, translated *only*, clearly indicates that a *condition* is stated on which the promise of the foregoing verse shall be made good. This condition is the constant and rigid observance of the Divine command, an inflexible firmness in adhering to that code of precepts contained in the law of Moses. This he was incessantly to make the man of his counsel and the theme of his daily and nightly study. It was in this respect mainly that his courage and fortitude were to be evinced. A steadfast obedience to the mandates of Jehovah would require a stronger principle of courage than his anticipated conflicts with the most formidable enemies. The important lesson which we hence learn is, that in nothing is there more scope for the display of the highest moral heroism than in daring, in all circumstances, to cleave steadfastly to the word of God as the rule of our conduct.—*Bush*. **To the right . . . or to the left.**—Perfect obedience it represented by a straight line, and a course of sin by a crooked way.—*Steele*. **Prosper.**—Read "*act wisely*," as the Hebrew word strictly means.—*Cook*.

8. **This book of the law.**—That is, by way of emphasis, *the* book of the law; the law of Moses, to which, as he well knew, God attached the utmost importance, and of which he speaks as if it were at that moment in Joshua's hand, or at his side, as it continually ought to be.—*Bush*. **Shall not depart.**—The written divine law shall be a theme of constant study, thought, and conversation, the rule of both his private and official life.—*Steele*. **Thou shalt meditate therein day and night.**—We

that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

are not to think of this meditation as a learned study, but rather as a mature reflection upon the law by which Joshua penetrates more deeply into its meaning, and thus becomes qualified to speak more clearly, pointedly, and powerfully to the people. Comp. Deut. 6:7; 11:19; 17:19. Comp. further Ps. 1:2. — *Fay*. Have good success. — Rather act wisely. Compare verse 7. — *Steele*.

9. Have I not? — “Have I not?” (*nonne*) is a rhetorical mode of saying, “Behold, I have,” the assurance being clothed in the form of an affirmative question. — *Keil*. Observe the repetition of the words of exhortation. The Hebrew leader is reminded again and again that it was not his work but God's work which he had been raised up to carry out. Comp. Deut. 31:7, 8, 23. — *Maclear*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — The reference to “the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord,” with which our lesson opens, connects the book of Joshua with the Pentateuch, as a continuation of the history of the Israelites. The forty years of wandering in the wilderness were drawing to a close, and the host had reached the borders of the Promised Land. Having been warned of God that his end drew near, Moses prayed that after he should have been gathered to his people, the Most High would not leave the congregation without a ruler and a guide. God answered his servant's prayer, and, in obedience to the divine command, Moses solemnly set apart Joshua as his successor, and delivered to him a charge full of warning and encouragement. This is the last act of a forty years' ministry. Moses ascended to the top of Pisgah, to behold the land he was forbidden to enter, and to die. But Joshua was left below to continue the work, and to continue it alone. “And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days.” Then the word of the Lord came to Joshua, as described in our lesson. “Never,” says Stanley, “in the history of the chosen people, could there have been such a blank as that when they became conscious that ‘Moses, the servant of the Lord,’ was dead. He who had been their leader, their lawgiver, their oracle, as far back as their memory could reach, was taken from them at the very moment when they seemed most to need him. It was to fill up this blank that Joshua was called. The narrative labors to impress upon us the sense that the continuity of the nation and of its high purpose was not to be broken by the change of person and situation. ‘As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.’ There was, indeed,

as yet, no hereditary or fixed succession. But the germ of that succession is better represented by the very contrast between Moses and Joshua than in any other passage in the Sacred History. The difference, indeed, was marked as strongly as possible. Joshua was the soldier,—the first soldier consecrated by the Sacred History. He was not a teacher, not a prophet; he was a simple, straightforward, undaunted soldier.” The lawgiver had done his part; the warrior succeeded to the administration of affairs, and to the directing intercourse with God.

Lesson Topics.—I. The New Leader Commissioned. II. The New Leader Directed. III. The New Leader Encouraged.

I. THE NEW LEADER COMMISSIONED (vs. 1, 2). Joshua was divinely called and commissioned. The government of the chosen people was a pure theocracy. Whatever the agents or instruments that were employed by the Most High in the consummation of his purposes concerning Israel, he was himself their King. This is the most prominent truth of all this history. The God who had selected Moses for his great work, and removed him when that work was accomplished, himself now supplies the great lawgiver's place, in so far as it was to be supplied. For it is worthy of notice that, though Joshua was chosen as Moses' successor, divinely commissioned to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land, he was not to be Moses' equal. The position of that great man, in its relation both to God and to the people, was peculiar, and it remains unique. It was only “some” of Moses' “honor” that he was to put upon Joshua (Num. 27:20). The soldier's inferiority to the lawgiver was most strongly marked in the terms and method of their intercourse with God. Moses, as the mediator between Jehovah and His people, enjoyed unrestricted personal intercourse with the Most High, “face to face.” This privilege was denied to Joshua. The high priest was to be his medium of communication with God. He was to bring his matters to Eleazar, and he was to inquire of God for him through the ordinary means of obtaining the knowledge of the divine will, and his action was to be controlled by the word of the priest. He was not even allowed unrestrained independence of movement. “And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him, after the judgment of Urim before the Lord, at his word shall they go out, and at his word shall they come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation” (Num. 27:21). In all other respects Joshua was to be what Moses had been to the children of Israel. This was clearly recognized by the people. “According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee; only the Lord thy God be with thee, as He was with Moses” (v. 17). “On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life” (chap. 4:14). Who was the man whom the Lord thus put in Moses' place?

1. *His History.* Joshua was the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, and was born in Egypt, probably about the time of Moses' flight into Midian. Of the circumstances of his birth and his life in Egypt nothing is certainly known. The name which he gave to his son would seem to indicate that the father of the future leader, so far from being one of those who "defiled themselves with the idols of Egypt" (Ezek. 20:8), maintained his faith in the promises made to his fathers, even at a time when God seemed to have forgotten his people, and trained up his son to expect their fulfilment in the appointed time. Nun called his son Oshea, or Hoshea, the name borne by the last king of Israel and the first minor prophet, which signifies *deliverance*, or *salvation*. Moses changed this name (Num. 13:16) by prefixing the sacred syllable, expressive of the self-existent One, Jehovah, to Jehoshua, which, of course, signifies *God's deliverance* or *salvation*. By contraction Jehoshua became Joshua, the Greek form of which is JESUS (Matt. 1:21). As the future leader grew through boyhood and youth to manhood, the toil of the brick-kiln and of the field, beneath the scorching Egyptian sun, the burdens, the bastinado of the taskmaster, must all have been matters of daily familiarity with him, if not of personal experience. The intervention of Moses in behalf of his enslaved countrymen, when he was a man of forty, and the great events connected with the exodus which followed, must have revived his faith in the God of his fathers. In the wilderness begins our personal acquaintance with Joshua. His name is first mentioned in connection with the attack of the Amalekites upon the Israelites when they had come to Rephidim. Moses commanded Joshua to fight against the foe, and he did, "discomfiting Amalek with the edge of the sword" (Exod. 17:13). The Pentateuch records no more of Joshua's deeds as a warrior. For a long period he appears only as "Moses' minister," the constant attendant on the leader of his people (Exod. 24:12, 13). He was one of the spies selected by Moses to explore the Promised Land (Num. 13:16). All, save Joshua and Caleb, brought back an unfavorable report, and as a punishment they were not permitted to go over Jordan, but died in the wilderness. Indeed, Joshua and Caleb were the only men that left Egypt above twenty years of age who secured an inheritance in person in the Promised Land. These illustrative facts enable us to judge of that discipline by which Joshua was prepared for the responsible and exalted position to which he was called upon the death of Moses. He must have been about eighty-five years of age when our lesson opens.

2. *His Character.* The qualities of this man commissioned of God to lead His people, as they appear in these incidents, are fidelity and courage. Joshua was a faithful subordinate, jealous for the honor of the leader he served (Num. 11:26-29). It is such men whom God calls to greater responsibilities. The law of promotion in the service of the Great King is embodied in the words, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Joshua is always brave, and his

courage is no mere matter of constitutional temperament, nor the result of an inability to recognize danger and difficulty; it springs from his faith in God, by whom he was strengthened for battle. Men place a high value on physical courage. Cowardice subjects men to contempt everywhere. But moral courage is a virtue of a higher caste and nobler origin than physical. It springs from consciousness of right intention and faith in the living God, and renders a man in the pursuit or defense of virtue superior to the fear of reproach, opposition, or contempt. Both the physical and the moral may be united in the man, as in the case of Wellington; the moral may exist without the physical, as in Bishop Cranmer; and, unhappily, there are many illustrations of the existence of physical courage where there is an entire absence of the moral. Many a man abounds in the former, is never appalled by danger, who is yet lamentably deficient in the latter, afraid of his companions, easily seduced to evil, shrinking before a laugh or a sneer. Joshua was probably a man of great physical courage; he certainly had great moral courage.

II. THE NEW LEADER DIRECTED (vs. 2, 6-9). Whom the Lord commissions he directs. Joshua's call to his great work and responsibility is followed immediately by specific directions how to proceed. He is commanded—

1. *To lead the people over the Jordan* (v. 2). This first duty of the new leader was full of difficulty. The Jordan was swollen and must have seemed absolutely impassable. But the command was clear, and we discover no hesitation or question on the part of Joshua. He seems to have acted on the principle that simple obedience was his duty, and that all the rest belonged to God. This is the true spirit. It is the triumph of faith simply to obey, even when the command seems a contradiction or an impossibility, when it is sure only of one thing—that the voice speaking the command is the voice of God. Clear as to *that*, no matter to what it lead, the man of faith sets out to obey, with light falling only where he walks. At the entrance gate of all true obedience God asks if we have faith to *do* what we cannot fully know, and *go* where darkness still clouds the way. We need not fear. He has a way over the gulf that to us seems impassable, which we may not see till we reach it. The cloud-banks that look like land, threatening hindrance or wreck to the on-going ship, dissolve as she advances, and leave a clear and sun-lit sea.

2. *To observe the law* (vs. 7, 8). This was to be among the main sources of Joshua's strength. Truth is the mother of strength everywhere. Want of harmony with truth means weakness; contact with truth is always a source of strength. The men who have most nobly stood for God, and most mightily moved the world, have been those who submitted themselves to the divine will, who loved the law of the Lord, and meditated therein day and night.

3. *To be strong and courageous* (vs. 6, 7, 9). The importance of these qualities appears in the repetition of the exhort-

tations concerning them. The work to which he was called was both difficult and dangerous, and would demand the exercise of all his powers with energy and unflinching determination. The real battle was to be fought in Joshua's own heart. If he is brave and obedient God will take care of the issue. The new leader conquered Canaan when he conquered himself. The repetition of the injunction not only marks its importance, but suggests that strength and courage would be required to observe the law, as well as to battle with and overcome enemies. So it is in our warfare: in order to be efficient soldiers we must first attain to self-mastery. It is on the hither side of Jordan that the promised inheritance is to be won.

III. THE NEW LEADER ENCOURAGED (vs. 3-6, 8). The Lord does not leave his servant without grounds for his faith and inspiration for his courage. He renews to him the promise made to Moses (vs. 2, 3). The description of the land is here repeated that there might be no room for doubt as to what was covered by the promise (v. 4). This had all been given to the people of Israel, and no human power could keep them from possessing it (v. 5). The reason why Joshua should be thus irresistible comes out in the promise which follows the declaration (v. 5), and is repeated (v. 9). "I will be with thee." His sufficiency was not to be of himself, but of God. Over against every divine command there is a divine promise of strength to obey, and of blessedness to be found in obedience. God commands us to cross no Jordans the waters of which he will not part before our obedient steps; He sends us forth upon no difficult duty without saying, "The Lord Thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." This deprives the disobedient of any possible excuse.

JULY 8, 1883.]

LESSON II.

[JOSHUA 3:5-17.]

PASSING OVER JORDAN.

GOLDEN TEXT.—When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." — Isa. 43:2.

TIME.—B. C. 1451. **PLACE.**—The Jordan, near the city of Jericho and the head of the Dead Sea.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

5. And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

5. Sanctify yourselves. — By sacred ablutions and observances, and by a change of raiment where the washing of the raiment was impracticable. Compare the marginal references. — *Steele*. These were the outward signs of the sanctification, which really consisted at the same time in the spirit-

6. And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

7. And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

ual purification, the turning of the heart to God in faith and trust in his promise, and in willing obedience to his commands, that they might rightly take to heart the wonder of grace which the Lord would the next day perform among them. — *Keil*. **To-morrow.** — The tenth of Nisan (4: 19), the anniversary of the day on which, forty years before, the Israelites had "taken to them" (Exod. 12: 3) "every man a lamb" as a Paschal victim. — *Maclear*. **Wonders**, is the term used to describe the working of Jehovah in Egypt and in the wilderness on behalf of his people (Exod. 3: 20; 34: 10; Judges 6: 13), and very often in the Psalms, sometimes in our version rendered "marvels" or "miracles." — *Douglas*.

6. **Joshua spake unto the priests.** — On ordinary occasions the Levites of the house of Kohath, by special command, bore the ark. But when removed from within the veil, or when borne on festive occasions of extraordinary interest, the priests, the offspring of Aaron, were the bearers. (Chap. 6: 6, and 1 Kings 8: 3, 6. — *Steele*. **The ark of the covenant.** — The ark of the covenant, or the testimony, was a sacred chest containing the two tables of stone inscribed with the Ten Commandments (and the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod [Heb. 9: 4]). The cover of the ark was a plate of pure gold, overshadowed by two cherubims, with their faces bent down and their wings meeting. This was the very throne of Jehovah, who was therefore said to "dwell between the cherubims." — *Wm. Smith*. **Pass over before the people.** — In all their former marches the ark was carried in the centre of this immense camp, but now it was to proceed at the head of the army and to go before them, and at such a distance, about three-quarters of a mile, as the whole camp might see it as their guide. — *Clarke*. **They took up.** — That is, on the day following. The course of events is anticipated in order to give a finish to this portion of the narrative. — *Cook*.

7. **This day will I begin to magnify thee.** — This was only the beginning of a glorious succession of miracles attesting the divine commission of Joshua. Jehovah pledges to make Joshua great in the estimation of the people, and thus secure to him their promised loyalty and obedience. Compare chap. 1: 17. — *Steele*. God had before put distinguished honor upon Joshua on several occasions (Ex. 24: 13; Deut. 31: 7), but it had not been in so public and solemn a manner; now he designs to magnify him as the successor of Moses in the government. He was to be the visible instrument of working a mighty miracle in the eyes of the nation; and from his circumstantially foretelling how the waters should be cut off as soon as the feet of the priests should touch them (v. 13) it was demonstrated that the secret of the Lord was with him. — *Bush*. **As I was with Moses, etc.** — The comparison with Moses reminds us of what is said (Exod. 14: 31), how, after crossing the Red Sea, "the people

8. And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan.

9. And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God.

10. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and

that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

11. Behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.

12. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of

feared Jehovah, and believed Jehovah and His servant Moses."—*Douglas.*

8. **The brink of the water.**—Heb.: *end of the water*, that is, the eastern margin of the river. It is evident from Joshua's address to the people, which immediately follows, that all the Lord's words to Joshua are not reported here. . . The main point is to show that the whole order of the crossing was arranged by the Lord and not by Joshua. **Stand still in Jordan.**—As a solemn and impressive indication to the passing host that the miracle is wrought by Jehovah, whose chosen ministers are the priests, and the symbol of whose presence is the ark.—*Steele.*

9. **Unto the children of Israel.**—The objection that Colenso urges against these addresses to the children of Israel by Moses and by Joshua, that it was a physical impossibility for so vast an encampment to hear the words of one speaker, falls to the ground when we reflect that all the people were addressed not personally *en masse*, but representatively, as specified in v. 2 and chap. 1: 10, 16, through the heads and officers of their tribes.—*Steele.*

10. **That the living God is among you.**—Not a dull, senseless, lifeless, inactive deity, like the gods of the heathen, but a God of life, power, and energy, able to work for you, and to put to confusion all your enemies.—*Bush.* **That he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, etc.**—In this passage the whole seven nations of Canaan are mentioned, as in other cases where the language is meant to be specially impressive (24: 11; Deut. 7: 1). Much more frequently only part are named, as the Hittites (1: 4), the Amorites and Canaanites (5: 1; 7: 7, 9, etc.), the Girgashites being always one of the omitted nations, except in Neh. 9: 2. Jehovah would without fail *drive them out* or *dispossess* them; the same Hebrew word expressing with great felicity that a possession is taken from one party and that it is given to another.—*Douglas.*

11. **Lord of all the earth.**—A significant appellation of God, where the conquest of a land is in question. From him Israel has his title to Canaan.—*Fay.*

12. **Take ye twelve men out of the tribes of Israel.**—The object of this selection is afterwards explained (chap. 4: 4, 5). They were now to be chosen, and to stand ready at a moment's warning for the service

Israel, out of every tribe a man.

13. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, *that* the waters of Jordan shall be cut off *from* the waters that

come down from above; and they shall stand upon a heap.

14. And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people;

15. And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jor-

to which they were set apart. — *Bush*. **Out of every tribe a man.** — This was done that every tribe might be represented in the memorial, and have its accredited witness of the great event. — *Bush*.

13. **The waters of Jordan shall be cut off [from] the waters that come down from above.** — More literally, and in every way better, “the waters of Jordan shall be cut off [even] the waters that come down from above;” so that it was these upper waters that stood as a heap, as is said (v. 16), whereas those below the point of crossing failed, and were cut off. — *Douglas*. We take the meaning to be that just above the crossing the waters were “congealed,” or solidified, as if dammed up by an invisible perpendicular wall across the channel, causing the waters above to overflow all the banks. Below the miraculous dam the channel ran dry to the Dead Sea. — *Whedon*.

14. **Removed from their tents.** — Indicating full preparation for the passage; they took the tents with them. — *Gray*. The original expression means primarily *to pull up*, and it is used with reference to tent-pins, which are pulled up when a tent is to be moved. It very naturally came to be used with reference to the breaking up of the encampment preparatory to departure, since the first step of the process was the pulling up of the tent-pins. — *Johnson*.

15. **They that bare the ark.** — The ark was the symbol of Jehovah's presence, his peculiar dwelling-place. It contained the expression of his will graven upon stones. The priests who bore it were his special ministers. It was therefore as if the water had stayed at the footsteps of Jehovah himself. The occurrence of the event at the very moment when the feet of the priests touched the water rendered its miraculous character unmistakable. — *Johnson*. **For Jordan overfloweth all his banks.** — The original Hebrew expresses nothing more than that the Jordan “was full (or filled) up to all its banks, meaning the banks of its channel; it ran with full banks, or was brim-full. Thus understood, the Biblical account corresponds entirely to what we find to be the case at the present day. — *Robinson*. The Jordan flows at the bottom of a deep valley, which descends to the water's edge on either side in two, occasionally in three, terraces. Within the lowest of these the stream, ordinarily less than one hundred feet wide in this lower part of its course, is confined. The margin is overgrown with a jungle of tamarisks and willows, the covert during the later months of the year of wild beasts. But in the spring-time these thickets are reached by the rising water (cf. the figure “like a lion from the swelling of Jordan” (Jer. 49: 19; 50: 44), and the river,

dan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest),

16. That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan; and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, *even* the salt

sea, failed, *and* were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.

17. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

occasionally at least, fills the ravine which forms its proper bed to the brim, as Robinson saw in 1838. Its highest rise takes place about the time when Joshua had to cross it. **All the time of harvest.** — The barley harvest. By the middle of April there would have been several weeks of hot weather, and the snows of Hermon would have been melted. The flood having filled the two lakes of Merom and Tiberias is then discharged in a torrent through the lower Jordan into the Dead Sea. At this time the river cannot be forded; and if passed at all can only be so by swimming. This, however, was a hazardous feat (cf. 1 Chron. 12: 15); and though no doubt performed by the two spies, who were probably picked with a view to it, was utterly out of the power of the mixed multitude that followed Joshua. The mere fact that the whole vast host crossed the stream of Jordan at this season is no small proof of the miracle here recorded. No human agency then known and available could have transported them speedily and safely from bank to bank. — *Cook.*

16. **Stood and rose up upon a heap.** — Being checked in their course they continued to accumulate and swell higher and higher, till they filled up the channel to a great distance towards the source of the river. **From the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan.** — The position of these cities is not easily ascertained. As to the first, nothing is known; and perhaps it was even then so obscure as to be described by its nearness to Zaretan, a place of more notoriety. This we learn from 1 Kings 4: 12 was situated below Jezreel, near Beth-shean, or Scythopolis, and not far from Succoth; but Succoth, as appears from Gen. 33: 17, Josh. 13: 27, lay on the east of Jordan, not far from the Lake of Gennesaret, and somewhere in this immediate vicinity, doubtless, was Adam situated. — *Bush.* **Right against Jericho.** — In front, in full view of. The exact spot is unknown. — *J. F. & B.* It is probable that the people crossed at what was afterwards called Beth-abara, or *house of passage*, which seems to have derived its name from this very circumstance. It was here that John baptized (John 1: 28), and that Jesus as well as Joshua began to be magnified. — *Bush.*

17. **And the priests . . . stood firm on dry ground.** — Stood fixedly and immovably in the same place and posture, neither pressed upon by the waters, nor sinking in the mire, nor shifting their position. — *Bush.* **All the Israelites passed . . . clean over Jordan.** — The Jordan is

now passed, and *Canaan is attained!* The forty years' sojourn is closed, and for the first ecstatic moment the feet of the tribes are standing on the Promised Land! Their departure from Egypt and their arrival in Canaan are signalized by parallel miracles of sea and river. Both at their exit and at their entrance Jehovah leads them through a watery gate, by cleaving the waves asunder. — *Whedon.*

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — Being commissioned of God, Joshua at once assumed the command and issued his orders, and his position was recognized without hesitation. "All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go" (chap. 1: 10-18). The new leader entered at once upon his preparations to take possession of the land. The host of Israel was still on the eastern side of Jordan. The first step in the fulfilment of his commission was to carry the people over that river. But there was something to be done before this could be accomplished with safety and wisdom. The crossing of the river was indeed the end of all their wanderings in the wilderness, but it was only the beginning of the conflict which was to put them in possession of Canaan; and this conflict was likely to be a severe one. The Lord had promised to fight for them, but they would none the less have to fight for themselves. The fulfilment of God's promise was conditional on their own performances. Indeed, this is the law everywhere and always. The city of Jericho, a walled town of great strength, distant about seven miles from the Jordan, would oppose the first obstacle to the onward march of Israel. It was the key of western Palestine, and would naturally be the first object of their attack. Future success or failure would mainly depend on the result of operations there. As a wise, far-sighted general, therefore, does Joshua, as a first step, send two men to reconnoitre the strength of this city. The spies safely reached Jericho, and obtained lodgings in the house of Rahab. This woman concealed them at the peril of her life; for so active and vigilant were the authorities of the city, on account of the proximity of the Israelitish camp, that they discovered the ingress of the two Hebrews, and sent to Rahab to inquire respecting them. She, however, gave her secret guests every information concerning the fears of the people, and succeeded in sending them safely away. "So the two men returned, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all things that befell them: and they said unto Joshua, Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us" (chap. 2: 1-24). A panic-stricken and demoralized enemy is a more than half-conquered enemy. The report of the spies determined Joshua to delay no longer, but to profit at once by the existing state of things; and he issued his orders for the immediate crossing of the river. The enormous host, numbering more than two millions, descended from Shittim to

the bank of the swollen and surging stream. Arrived there, a delay of three days intervened — an interval none too long for the completion of the necessary preparations, now that they were about to quit the comparative security of the wilderness, and enter on a hostile territory (3:1-4).

Lesson Topics.—I. The Preparation Completed. II. The Passage Effectuated.

I. THE PREPARATION COMPLETED (vs. 5-13). At the end of the three days Joshua communicated his instructions to the people. His first order was one of deep significance: "Sanctify yourselves." The entrance of the people into the Promised Land must be prepared for by purification according to the ceremonial law (Exod. 19:10-14). All outward pollution must be put away. Thus we are reminded of the warning relating to that heavenly country of which Canaan was the type. The external purity here enjoined, before the Israelites could enter upon their earthly inheritance, suggests the truth that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14); and that into the heavenly city "there shall in nowise enter anything that defileth" (Rev. 21:27). "For to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." The passage of the river and entrance to the land was to be distinctly marked by the display of Divine power. Indeed all these final arrangements give great prominence to the important truth illustrated by the entire history, namely, that God himself was Israel's leader. As such, he used —

1. *Joshua as the instrument of his power.* The son of Nun now really enters upon the duties of his exalted office as the agent of Jehovah, and His representative to the people. Hence he receives anew the divine authorization (v. 7). It was necessary that the authority under which Joshua acted should be explicitly attested. And God here declares that it shall be so attested. How completely this promise was fulfilled the whole of the after-history declares (4:14, etc.). Many and mighty miracles wrought by him attested his divine commission, and proclaimed the authority by which he spake and under which he acted. As the agent and representative of the Most High, Joshua was instructed as well as authorized (v. 8). He was not left to the guidance of his own unaided wisdom. He was not to utter his own, but the words of God, in the ears of the people.

2. *The ark as the symbol of his presence.* This "ark of the covenant," also called "ark of God" and "ark of the testimony," was the first part of the furniture of the Tabernacle directed to be made. A minute description of it accompanied the direction (Exod. 25:10-22). It was the symbol of the divine presence with his people, and had accompanied them in all their wanderings in the wilderness. In all those journeyings the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun marched in the van, followed by Reuben, Simeon, and Gad; after these came the ark and other furniture of the Tabernacle, borne by the

Levites, the other tribes following as a rear-guard. But on this occasion a new order of march was enjoined. The priests bearing the ark were commanded to march in advance of the whole body, and the people were forbidden to approach nearer than one thousand yards to them. Thus, borne by the priests in front of the people, the ark takes henceforth the place of the pillar of cloud and fire which had led Israel through the wilderness (Exod. 13: 21, 22). It was to be separated from the people in its advance by so great a distance that it might show the way. Had the masses of the people, who by no means marched as soldiers, crowded around it, those that were behind could not have seen it. Even without pillar of cloud, and without ark of covenant, the Lord still and forever goes before his people. As their real leader—

3. *God speaks to the people by the mouth of Joshua* (vs. 9-13). Here the Most High informs Israel of what he is about to do, and thus encourages their faith in him. They were in circumstances to test their confidence in God. The overflowing Jordan rolled between them and the land they were to possess. The fact that their Lord led them to the crossing, and commanded them to enter, ought in itself to have been a sufficient assurance that he would open their way. But, in condescension to their human weakness, he declares his purpose, and gives his promise. So merciful is our God. He commanded a memorial of this miracle to be erected, that the memory of it, perpetuated among the people, might be the standing pledge of the presence of the "living God," who would drive out their enemies before them. "Before thee also, O soul ! there stand waters of affliction through which thou must travel before thou canst enter the heavenly Canaan. But only go in with good heart, and trust thyself to God's help ; He will open a way for thee, so that the streams cannot drown thee. — Psalm 66 : 12 : Isa. 43 : 2."

II. THE PASSAGE EFFECTED (vs. 14-17). Everything was done according to the divine direction. The ark of the covenant preceded the host, borne high on the shoulders of the priests. The people remained behind, high up on the banks, following with eager eyes the sacred symbol, as its bearers approached the rushing waters of the Jordan. No sooner had the feet of the priests touched the brim of the waters than the waters above were stayed and rose in heaps, while those below ran on in their course towards the Dead Sea, and the whole river-bed before them was laid dry. The priests then marched into "the midst of the Jordan," where they remained till all the host of Israel had passed over. This being completed, Joshua, in accordance with the divine direction, selected a man from each of the twelve tribes to go into the midst of the river where the priests stood, and to take from thence each of them a stone. These stones were conveyed to Gilgal, and piled there as a monument of this miraculous event. After the stones had been brought out of the river-bed, the priests also bearing the ark came out ; and as soon as they reached the bank, the waters, which had been thus restrained by divine power, rolled on in

their usual course, and the Jordan overflowed its banks as before. Imagine the joy of Israel, at last on the soil of the Promised Land. What a lesson on the faithfulness and long-suffering of God is afforded by their history !

“The importance of this miracle can hardly be overestimated. The people were now about to enter on a fresh stage of their national existence, and that under a new leader. On the issue of the next few days or weeks would depend whether they should become the masters of the goodly land, ‘flowing with milk and honey,’ which had been the earliest dream of their childhood, or be crushed by its warlike inhabitants ; either reduced to slavery, or utterly destroyed, so that they should ‘be no more a people, and the name of Israel should be no more in remembrance.’ Would the Lord be with them indeed ? Would he fight for them as of old ? Would he work wonders for them by the hand of Joshua, as he had done by the hand of Moses ? The assurance of the continued presence and protection of Jehovah, afforded by the drying up of the Jordan, was exactly what was needed to encourage their fainting hearts, and secure for Joshua, accredited by so mighty a sign, the loyal allegiance of the people. This is the light in which this miracle is set before us in the words of God to Joshua. ‘This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee’ (v. 7) ; and the result tallied with it. ‘On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in sight of all Israel ; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life’ (4:14). Another purpose to be answered by this exercise of the divine power in behalf of Israel, was to deepen the feeling of discouragement already, as we have seen, existing in the minds of the Canaanites, and thus prepare for their easier and complete overthrow. That this was the effect of this miracle is plainly stated by the sacred historian. ‘And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their hearts melted, neither was their spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.’ That was no idle or gratuitous display of power, which afforded to the Canaanites, to Israel, and to Joshua himself, such unmistakable evidence that ‘the living God, the Lord of all the earth,’ — no dead idol, or mere local deity — was among them, ‘and that he would not fail nor forsake them.’”

JULY 15, 1883.] LESSON III. [JOSHUA 5: 10-15; 6: 1-5.

THE PLAINS OF JERICHO.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." — Heb. 11: 30.

TIME. — B. C. 1451. **PLACE.** — The plains of Jericho.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

10. And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

11. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day.

10. The children of Israel encamped in Gilgal. — Gilgal ("rolling," "rolling away") was situated between Jericho and the river Jordan, about one mile and a half, or two miles, from the former, and six from the latter. — *Bush.* The site of the camp was no doubt fortified by Joshua, as it constituted for some time the abiding foothold in Canaan, whence he sallied forth to subdue the country, and was also the place of safety where the ark, and no doubt also the women, children, cattle, and other property of the people were left. Hence the demolition of Jericho and Ai, strong fortresses in the neighborhood of Gilgal, was no doubt dictated by sound policy as well as by religious obligations. — *Cook.* **And kept the passover.** — Heb.: "and made the passover." The third from its institution. The first was observed in Egypt on the eve of their departure, the second at Sinai on the following year, Num. 9: 1, 2, while during the long interval down to the present time it had been wholly suspended. — Amos 5: 25. **On the fourteenth day of the month.** — That is, the fourteenth day of the first month, or Nisan. — *Bush.* The time fixed by the law (See Exod. 12: 18; Lev. 23: 5; Num. 28: 16). Thus the people having been circumcised (vs. 2-7), the national existence was commenced by a solemn act of religious dedication. — *J. F. & B.* It is to be noted that they were just about to go to war against foes mightier than themselves. Their only hope of success lay in the help of God. At such a crisis the need of full communion with God would be felt indeed; and the blessing and strength of it are accordingly granted. The revival of these two great ordinances after so long an intermission could not but awaken the zeal and invigorate the faith and fortitude of the people. — *Cook.*

11. The old corn of the land. — Rather "produce of the land." It is to be noted that it appears from verse 12 that the Israelites eat of this produce, not only "on the morrow after the Passover," but from that time forward during the year, the manna now being withheld as no longer necessary. Hence it must have been the new corn, just coming in at the time of the Passover (cf. Lev. 23: 11), not the "old corn," of which no adequate supply could be forthcoming, of which they eat. — *Cook.* **On**

12. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

13. And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto

the morrow after the Passover. — Meaning, probably, on the sixteenth day of the month; for the paschal lamb was killed and roasted on the fourteenth, and the feast began that night, which, according to their reckoning, formed a part of the fifteenth day, through the whole of which the feast continued, so that the sixteenth day was the *morrow after the passover*, when they were required by the Law (Lev. 23:10, 11), to offer to God the wave-sheaf of the first fruits, and then were allowed to eat the rest. — *Bush*. **Unleavened cakes.** — According to the requirements of the Law (Ex. 12:8, 15). **Parched corn.** — That is, roasted harvest ears. — *Maclear*.

12. Neither had the children of Israel manna any more. — Cf. Ex. 16:35. This abundance of food led to the discontinuance of the manna; and the fact of its then ceasing, viewed in connection with its seasonable appearance in the barren wilderness, is a striking proof of its miraculous origin. It has been previously shown (Ex. 15:27: 32:6; Deut. 11:6, 28; chap. 1:11) that the manna was not the sole food of the Israelites from the time of its first fall till this period. The supply of manna was given to relieve their necessities, when no other food was procurable, and it was given only to the extent and during the period their need required. — *J. F. & B.*

13. The sixth chapter ought certainly to have commenced here, as the subject now entered upon is entirely new, and the present arrangement most unnaturally divides the communication which Joshua had with the angel, and which is continued to chap. 6:5. — *Bush*. **When Joshua was by Jericho.** — In the immediate vicinity of that city, probably engaged in surveying the fortifications, and in meditating the best plan of a siege. — *J. F. & B.* Jericho was the key of western Palestine, as standing at the entrance of the two main passes into the central mountains, one commanding the approach to Jerusalem, the other the approach to Ai and Bethel. — *Stanley*. **There stood a man.** — One in the appearance of a man, one whom Joshua at first took for a man. That he was a superhuman being, however, is evident from what follows; and there seems no good reason to dissent from the established opinion of both ancient and modern expositors that this was no other than the Son of God, the Eternal Word, appearing in that form which he was afterwards to assume for the redemption of men. The reasons for this opinion are, (1) The title which he here gives himself, "Captain of the host of the Lord," which is but another form of the name "Lord of hosts," implying the ruler of all the heavenly hosts, and which is evidently the title of Jehovah-Jesus. (2) His acceptance of the worship or adoration which Joshua here pays him. This an angel or any created being would undoubtedly have refused. Comp. Rev. 19:10; 22:9; Judg.

him, and said unto him, *Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?*

14. And he said, *Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?*

15. And the captain of the

Lord's host said unto Joshua, *Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy, and Joshua did so.*

1. Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in.

2. And the Lord said unto Joshua, *See, I have given*

13:16. Here, however, instead of reproving Joshua for doing him too much honor, he commands him to do still more, by "loosing his shoes from off his feet;" thus insisting upon the highest acknowledgment of the Divine presence which was in use among the eastern nations. (3) From the place being made holy by his presence, which was the special prerogative of God, Ex. 3:5; and (4) From his being expressly called "*Jehovah*," chap. 6:2. — *Bush*. With his sword drawn. — The sword is a symbol of high executive power. The drawn sword intimates that that power is to be immediately exercised. Hence Joshua's anxiety to know in whose behalf the mysterious stranger has drawn his sword. — *Steele*. Joshua went unto him. — Showing that this was not a mere vision, but an actual appearance, the suddenness of which surprised, but did not daunt, the intrepid leader. — *J. F. & B*. Art thou for us, etc. — Probably, at first, supposing that he might be the Canaanitish general, coming to reconnoitre the Israelitish camp, as himself was come out to examine the city of Jericho. — *Clarke*.

14. And he said, *Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.* — "I am neither Israelite nor Canaanite, neither friend nor foe in your sense of the words, for I am not a mortal man, but as prince and leader of the Lord's hosts of the angels in heaven, and even of that very power of which you are commander, have I now come, to instruct and aid thee in the great undertaking in which thou art engaged." . . . He probably at the same moment put forth some visible demonstration of his true character, which at once satisfied Joshua, and filled him with an overwhelming sense of his majesty and glory, so that he instinctively fell on his face to the earth, and offered him those tokens of worship which a mortal is bound to pay to his Creator. How much reason he had for this is evident from chap. 6:2, where the august stranger expressly denominates himself *Jehovah*. — *Bush*.

15. Loose thy shoe. — It was a mark of reverence to cast off the sandals in approaching a place or person of eminent sanctity. — *Maclear*.

1. Now Jericho. — This verse is strictly parenthetical. It is inserted to explain the declaration which follows in verse 2. *Straitly shut up.* — More literally "had shut (*i. e.*, its gates), and was fast shut." Further emphasis is given by the clause *none went out and none came in.* — *Cook*.

2. And the Lord said. — The announcement of "the captain of the Lord's hosts," commenced verse 14, and interrupted by Joshua's question

into thine hand Jericho and the king thereof, *and* the mighty men of valor.

3. And ye shall compass the city all ye men of war, *and* go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

4. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

and obeisance, verses 14, 15, is here resumed. — *Cook*. I have given. — The past tense here strongly expresses the certainty of the future event. In the divine mind the act is already accomplished. — *Steele*.

3. Ye shall compass the city. — March round it. — *Gray*. Go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. — The circuit marches were thirteen in all, six during the first six days, and seven on the last, which was probably, as the Rabbins have assumed, a Sabbath. The *object* of these encompassing marches, about which much has been said, has been well indicated by Knobel, who says: "Jericho was to fall as the first fruits of the Canaanitish cities manifestly by Israel's God. The repeated compassing of the city directed attention with the sharpest intensity towards what was finally to come to pass, and when the event came left no doubt that Jehovah was its cause, while the courage of Israel is thereby raised also, and the despondency of the Canaanites increased." — *Fay*. The repetition during several days of this procession about the city could only be designed to exercise Israel in unconditional faith and patient trust in the power and assistance of God, and to impress deeply upon him that it was the omnipotence and fidelity of Jehovah alone which could give into his hand this fortified city, the bastion of the whole land. — *Keil*.

4. Seven priests shall bear before the ark. — The order of procession was, (1) the armed men; (2) the seven priests with their seven trumpets; (3) the priests with the ark of the covenant; (4) the remaining warriors as a rear-guard. — *Fay*. Trumpets of rams' horns. — Rather, *trumpets of soundings*, or, *of jubilee*. Not the long straight trumpets generally used, but the same kind that were to be employed on the first day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:24), and to announce the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:9). This instrument was curved, and would be more accurately rendered "cornet," as in 1 Chron. 15:28; 2 Chron. 15:14; Ps. 98:6; Hos. 5:8; Dan. 3:5. *Seven*. — Observe the significance here of the number, *seven* priests; *seven* horns; *seven* days of compassing the walls; *seven* repetitions of it on the *seventh* day. The influence of the number "seven" was not restricted to the Hebrews. It prevailed among the Persians (Esth. 1:10, 14), among the ancient Indians, to a certain extent among the Greeks and Romans, and probably among all nations where the week of seven days was established, as in Egypt, Arabia, China. Amongst the Hebrews seven days were appointed as the length of the Feasts of Passover and Tabernacles; seven days for the ceremonies of the consecration of priests; seven victims were to be offered on any special occasion; and at the ratification of a treaty, the notion of *seven* was embodied in the very term signifying to swear, literally meaning to *do seven times* (Gen. 21:28). The number seven was thus impressed with

5. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.

the seal of sanctity as the symbol of all connected with the Deity, with the subordinate notion of perfection or completeness. — *Maclear*.

5. **All the people shall shout.** — This was to take place during the seventh circuit, at a concerted signal. Previous to that signal they were prohibited from uttering a word; the twelve circumambulations were to be in perfect silence, save the sound of the trumpets. **The wall of the city shall fall down flat.** — Heb. : *shall fall under itself*, that is, to its very foundations. The portion of the wall which constituted the rear wall of Rahab's house must have been spared. See verse 22. **Ascend up every man straight before him.** — The moving column of men was so long that it completely encircled the city. When the wall fell there was a wall of soldiers surrounding it on every side. The command is that this living wall contract by each man's marching over the ruins towards the centre of the city. Escape would be impossible. — *Steele*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — The passage of the Jordan was effected on the tenth day of the first month, wanting only five days of forty years from the time when the Israelites left Egypt. They encamped that night at Gilgal, a place about five miles from the river, and two miles from Jericho. "The touching allegory by which in the 'Pilgrim's Progress' the passage of the Jordan is made the likeness of the passage of the river of Death to the land of rest beyond, has but a slight ground in the language of the Bible, or in the course of the history. The passage of the Jordan was not the end, but the beginning of a long and troubled conflict. Of this the first step was the occupation of Gilgal. It became immediately the frontier fortress. It was also, as Josephus well says, the 'place of freedom.' There they cast off the slough of their wandering life. The uncircumcised state was now to be 'rolled away.' The ancient rite was performed once more, and the knives of flint used on the occasion were preserved as sacred relics." This first act of Joshua on his entrance as the leader of Israel into the Land of Promise, taken in connection with the observance of the Passover which followed, is of deep significance. It intimates a distinct recognition of the new position of the people. "Hitherto, since their rebellion at Kadesh-barnea, they had been under a ban. By their impious resolve to return to Egypt rather than face the dangers of Canaan, they had rejected God, and therefore God had, temporarily, rejected them. As a token that they were no longer regarded by him as his covenant people, the symbol of the covenant, the rite of circumcision, was suspended; while, as an indication of displeasure at their determination to go back

to the land of slavery, the ordinance of the Passover, the memorial of their deliverance from that heavy bondage, was discontinued. But the years of rejection were now at an end, and the ban was removed. Entered on the Land of Promise, God once more regarded them as his own covenant people, and therefore the sign of the covenant was renewed." At Gilgal, Israel "rolled away the reproach of Egypt," by submitting once more, at the divine command, to the distinguishing ordinance of circumcision.

Lesson Topics. — I. The Camp at Gilgal. II. The Captain of the Host of the Lord.

I. THE CAMP AT GILGAL (vs. 10-12). Two significant events in the history of the Israelites, which followed immediately after the renewal of the rite of circumcision, and while they were still encamped at Gilgal, are brought to view in our lesson.

1. *The Keeping of the Passover* (v. 10). The passage of the Jordan was effected on the tenth day of the first month, Nisan (4:19). This was the day appointed for the selection of the Paschal Lamb (Exod. 12:3), and on the evening of the fourteenth the people kept the Passover for the first time on the sacred soil of their inheritance, exactly forty years after their fathers had first celebrated it on the eve of their departure from Egypt. The service had been intermitted from the day when it was performed the second time at Sinai. "Never since its first institution had its import been more powerfully shown. They were delivered from Egypt in order that they might hold possession of Canaan; and now at last Canaan was reached. The memorial of what Jehovah had done for their fathers would quicken their faith, and fill them with confidence as to the issue of the conflict that lay before them. For though reached, Canaan was not conquered; from the fortified camp at Gilgal, the walls and towers of Jericho, 'great and fenced up to heaven,' would be a stern but salutary reminder of the nature of the struggle on which they were about to enter, and of the need of a strength not their own to secure a successful issue."

2. *The stopping of the manna* (vs. 11, 12). Although from the period of their location in the neighborhood of Canaan there can be no doubt that the Israelites were partially fed with corn and other ordinary fruits of the earth, yet the manna continued to fall around the camp until the keeping of this Passover. In connection therewith the history records their first enjoyment of the bread of the land. "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten." It ceased because it was no longer needed. God will not specially or miraculously provide for us things which he has already put within our reach. The bread of the land, although not manna, was still bread from heaven. There is a heavenly manna which, because always needed, never fails — the true bread of life (John 6:31-35).

II. THE CAPTAIN OF THE HOST OF THE LORD (vs. 13-15; 6:1-5). The capture of Jericho was the next step to be taken

toward the conquest and possession of the land. The attention of Joshua, as we have seen, had been drawn to this city before the passage of the Jordan. "Jericho was the most, indeed the only, important town in the Jordan valley. Not only was it conspicuous amongst the other Canaanitish towns, for its walls and gates, and its rich temple, filled with gold, silver, iron, brass, and even Mesopotamian drapery, but its situation was such as must always have rendered its occupation necessary to any invader from that quarter. It was the key of Western Palestine, as standing at the entrance of the two main passes into the central mountains. From the issues of the torrent of the Kelt on the south, to the copious spring, afterwards called the 'fountain of Elisha,' on the north, the ancient city ran along the base of the mountains, and thus commanded the oasis of the desert valley, the garden or park of verdure, which, clustering round these waters has, through the various stages of its long existence, secured its prosperity and grandeur." Such, according to Stanley, was the city whose walls and towers the Israelites could see rising above the palm-tree groves, from which it took its distinctive name, "the city of palm-trees" (Deut. 34:3). The formidable strength of its fortifications might well awaken anxiety even in the mind of so dauntless a leader as Joshua. To storm it successfully with such forces as he had at his command was out of the question. Still, what he could do he did, and did at once. If he could not storm the city, he might starve it into subjection. So he laid siege to it, and established a strict blockade. "Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out and none came in" (6:1). But this siege must necessarily occupy a long time. This delay would be extremely hazardous to Israel. Everything depended upon the striking of a sudden and decisive blow. And then, as ever, just when it was most needed, came the renewed assurance of the presence and protection of the Most High. Joshua seems to have left the camp alone to reconnoitre the fortifications of his enemy. "And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho," that a revelation was made to him which entirely changed the aspect of affairs.

1. *The appearance* (v. 13). While engaged in inspecting the walls Joshua suddenly saw a warrior "over against him with his sword drawn in his hand." The sight must have been as alarming as it was unexpected. A faint-hearted man would have been terrified to speechlessness. But Joshua was not faint-hearted. He was strong and courageous. It was characteristic of the man to go up boldly and challenge the formidable stranger, and demand whether he was there as friend or foe: "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" It is wise and necessary to know well who are our friends and who are our foes, that we may know how to deal with them. He who views a friend as a foe, or a foe as a friend, falls into a dangerous snare; and, as such mistakes sometimes occur, we should be ever on our guard.

3. *The announcement*. (v. 14). "Nay, but as the captain of

the host of the Lord am I now come." "The host of the Lord" may mean either the Israelitish people (Exod. 7:4; 12:41; Isa. 55:4), or the angels (Psa. 148:2), or, which is more probable, both included. The "Captain" of this "host" was the angel of the covenant — Jehovah himself. That we have here not a created angel, but a manifestation of the divine word, the Second Person of the Trinity, appears from the history. (a) Joshua received from him the same command, to remove his shoes, given to Moses by Jehovah. (b) He is called Jehovah (6:2). There should have been no break between the fifth and sixth chapters, the first verse of chapter 6 being merely parenthetical, and the words, "And Jehovah said unto Joshua," etc. (6:2), following in sense "And Joshua did so," at the end of chapter 5. (c) He attributes to himself the delivery of Jericho into Joshua's hand (6:2). Awe-stricken, Joshua fell on his face and worshipped, and heard from Jehovah the assurance which would at once dispel his fears, and remind him that "the battle was the Lord's," not Israel's — that he had given into his hand "Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor."

3. *The instructions* (6:3-5). Having promised Joshua the conquest of Jericho, Jehovah prescribes minutely the manner of its capture. This was to be accomplished in such a way as to convince both the Israelites and their enemies that the Most High was the Leader and Defense of his people. A great procession was to be formed. The armed men were to fall into rank and lead the way; they were to be followed by seven priests with trumpets of rams' horns, and these again by other priests bearing the ark of the covenant; the rest of the people were to follow behind. In solemn silence, broken only by the shrill blast of the trumpets, the host of Israel, in this order, was to pass round the beleaguered city once a day for six days, and on the seventh day seven times.

These instructions were followed out. The strange procession was formed; marched round the city and returned to camp. For six days this proceeding was repeated. On the seventh day, when the inhabitants of Jericho had learned to laugh at this harmless mode of making war, the Israelites rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times. "And it came to pass, at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city. So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets; and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city," (6:16, 20).

There is something approaching the sublime in the spectacle presented to the mind's eye in this narrative. The great confidence in Jehovah's power displayed by the people of Israel on this occasion, contrasts very strikingly with the conduct of

their fathers when commanded to enter upon a similar enterprise. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days." No one can read this history thoughtfully without perceiving that it is not God's plan to do anything for men without the co-operation of their confidence and submission. Nor is it difficult to see the reason for this. All God's dealings with men have respect chiefly to moral and spiritual.

JULY 22, 1883.]

LESSON IV.

[JOSHUA 7:10-26.]

ISRAEL DEFEATED AT AI.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "Be sure your sin will find you out."
— Num. 32: 23.

TIME. — B.C. 1451. **PLACE.** — The camp at Gilgal.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

10. And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen

11. Israel hath sinned, and

10. **Get thee up.** — God's answer is given directly and, apparently, suddenly to Joshua, in terms of biting reproof. Joshua must no longer lie helpless before God: the cause of the calamity was to be found elsewhere. — *Cook*. **Wherefore liest thou upon thy face?** — The question involved the reproof that Joshua had no reason to doubt the fidelity of the Lord. Instead of seeking for the cause of the calamity in God, he ought to seek it in the sin of the people. — *Keil*. He might well divine that they had merited Jehovah's ill-will. — *Knobel*.

11. **Israel hath sinned.** — Observe how the act of the individual Achan was held to be that of the people (comp. 22: 20) till they repudiated it and cleared themselves of it. — *Douglas*. The "trespass" (v. 1) was the act of one man, yet is imputed to all Israel, which also shares in the penalty of it, verse 5. This is not to be explained as though all the people participated in the covetousness which led to Achan's sin (cf. verse 21). The nation as a nation was in covenant with God, and is treated by him not merely as a number of individuals living together for their own purposes under common institutions, but as a divinely constituted organic whole. Hence the sin of Achan defiled the other members of the community as well as himself, and robbed the people collectively of holiness before God and acceptableness with him. — *Cook*. **Have also transgressed my covenant.** — That is, have broken the conditions of the covenant or agreement of *general* obedience into which they had before entered, Ex. 19: 8; 24: 7; or have transgressed the *particular* precept relative to the accursed thing, ch. 6: 19. Covenant, in the Scriptures often has the sense of command, precept, ordinance. — *Bush*. **They**

and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff.

12. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.

13. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves

against to-morrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, *There is* an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.

14. In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, *that* the tribe which the Lord taketh shall come according to the families

have even taken of the accursed thing.—“Of that which had been devoted or dedicated.” Also stolen, and dissembled also.—The anger of God and the heinousness of Israel’s sin are marked by the accumulation of clause upon clause, emphasis being given to each new item in the indictment by the repetition of “also.”—Cook. Put it even among their own stuff.—Here was the culmination of the crime, they had appropriated to *themselves* what belonged to God [Cf. ch. 6 : 18].—Fay.

12. Therefore.—This word introduces the reason of Israel’s defeat.—Johnson. Because they were accursed.—In exact accordance with the threatening before denounced against them, ch. 6 : 18. Joshua was thus informed that this, and nothing else, was the ground of the controversy which God now had with his people. They had by their iniquity put themselves out of the range of his protection and blessing, and unless summary punishment was executed upon the offender, they would transfer upon themselves the very curse denounced against their adversaries.—Bush. Neither will I be with you any more.—This declaration proves that the strong promise of chap. 1 : 5 was conditioned on the fidelity of Israel.—Steele.

13. Sanctify the people.—Compare the instructions to Moses before the giving of the Law, Ex. 19 : 10.—Maclear ; and see note, lesson 2, verse 5. An accursed thing in the midst of thee.—God could at this time have told him who the person was that had done this thing, but does not. (1) To exercise the zeal of Joshua and Israel in searching out the criminal. (2) To give the sinner himself space to repent and make confession.—Henry.

14. Ye shall be brought.—That is, to the tabernacle, where God was accustomed to manifest himself. Tribes . . . families . . . households.—The tribe included all the descendants of one of the sons of Jacob. The family was a subordinate division of the tribe, a group of closely related households, corresponding most nearly to our word *clan*. The house or household was the family in our modern sense of the word (Num. 1 : 20-43 ; 3 : 18, 20, 21, 24, 27).—Johnson. Each of these was represented by its natural head, so that we must picture the affair as conducted in the following manner: In order to discover the tribe the

thereof; and the family which the Lord shall take shall come by households; and the household which the Lord shall take shall come man by man.

15. And it shall be, *that* he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

16. So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken:

17. And he brought the

family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken:

18. And he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

19. And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

twelve tribe princes came before the Lord; and in order to discover the family, the heads of families of the tribe that had been taken; and so on to the end, each one in turn being subjected to the lot. — *Kell.* **Which the Lord taketh.** — That is, the tribe which shall be discovered or declared guilty by the lot. The tribe thus indicated is said to be "taken by the Lord," because the lot was disposed of by him, according to Prov. 16:33; the transaction was specially overruled by him in his mysterious providence for the detection of the guilty. Of the sacred use of lots, see 1 Sam. 10:20, 21; 14:41, 42; Acts 1:24, 26. — *Bush.*

15. **He that is taken with the accursed thing.** — That is, he that is divinely pointed out as being involved in the guilt of the accursed thing. — *Bush.* **Burnt with fire.** — That is, after he had been put to death by stoning (cf. verse 25). The burning of the body after capital punishment was prescribed in extreme cases as an aggravation of the penalty (cf. Lev. 20:14). — *Cook.* **Wrought folly.** — Or wickedness, which in view of its consequences is also foolishness. — *Gray.* That all wickedness is folly, that every sinner is a fool, not indeed so much in an intellectual but above all things in a moral respect, this cutting truth is proclaimed by the Old Testament loudly and impressively. — *Fay.*

16. **Brought Israel by their tribes.** — See note on verse 14. 17, 18. **He brought the family of Judah, etc.** — We may perhaps best represent the whole process thus: The People of Israel. First lot — Tribe of Judah; Second lot — Clan of Zerah; Third lot — House of Zabdi (Fathers-house, represented by Zabdi); Fourth lot — Man Achan. — *Fay.*

19. **My Son.** — The appeal is grave and earnest; Joshua shows the spirit of the magistrate; he has no ill-will to the offender, no personal anger against him, whilst constrained to punish his crime. — *Cook.* **Give . . . glory to . . . God.** — A form of adjuration to tell the truth. — *J. F. & B.* The phrase assumes that the glory of God is always promoted by manifestation of the truth. — *Cook.* "The omniscience of Jehovah is proved by this discovery. Give him the praise, therefore, by a full confession of thy sin." — *Maclear.*

20. And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:

21. When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

22. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran into the tent; and behold, *it was hid* in his tent, and the silver under it.

23. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord.

24. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the

20. *Indeed I have sinned.*—The Hebrew original makes the *I* emphatic: I, and I only, have sinned.—*Steele*. Achan ingeniously confessed his crime, but it is to be feared that it was somewhat as Judas did when he had betrayed his master—from terror rather than from true repentance. There is, in fact, no virtue in a man's confessing his sins when they can no longer be hid.—*Thornley Smith*.

21. *I saw among the spoils.*—The three words occurring in the narrative, "I saw, I coveted, I took," strikingly express the rise, progress, and consummation of crime.—*Bush*. *A goodly Babylonish garment.*—Literally "a robe or cloak of Shinar," the plain in which Babylon was situated. The word here rendered garment means a long robe such as was worn by kings on state occasions, and by prophets.—*Cook*. *And two hundred shekels of silver.*—The word shekel signifies *weight*, generally a definite weight of unstamped gold, silver, brass, or iron. Here it may mean definite pieces of silver passing current, with the weight marked. In different periods the shekel varied in value. The shekel of the sanctuary differed from the shekel of the king. Its usual value was about sixty-two and one-half cents. The whole value of the silver was about \$125, when a dollar had nearly ten times the purchasing power that it now has. *A wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight.*—The shekel of gold was about five and a half dollars, so that this oblong or tongue-shaped bar was worth \$275. And the silver under it—That is, under the Babylonish garment. All the stolen goods were probably placed in some box or bag, and buried where no human eye could see them. The frankness and apparent penitence of this confession affects our hearts with sorrow for the sad fate of Achan. It lacked but two elements—spontaneity and seasonableness—which will be lacking in the confession of every impenitent sinner before the judgment seat of of Christ.—*Steele*.

23. *Laid them out.*—Literally, *poured them out.*—*Before the Lord.*—That is, before the ark of Jehovah, where he was enthroned, Comp. 6 : 8.—*Maclear*.

24. *Joshua and all Israel with him.*—The sin had been national (cf. on verse 1), and accordingly the expiation of it was no less so. The

wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.

25. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned them with stones, and burned

them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

26. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor unto this day.

whole nation, no doubt, through its usual representatives, took part in executing the sentence on Achan. — *Cook*. **Achan, son of Zerah.** — In a wide sense son of Zerah; strictly he was his great grandson. — *Fay*. **And his sons and his daughters.** — Achan had fallen by his own act under the ban (cf. 6:18), and consequently he and his were treated as were communities thus devoted (cf. Deut. 13:15-17). It would appear, too, that Achan's family must have been accomplices in his sin; for the stolen spoil could hardly have been concealed in his tent without their being privy thereto. — *Cook*. **The valley.** — Henceforth known by the name of Achor, i. e., causing trouble and sorrow, comp. ch. 15:7; Isa. 65:10; Hos. 2:15. The exact site of the valley is unknown, but it was somewhere on the northern border of the tribe of Judah, among the ridges to the south of Jericho. — *Maclear*.

25. **Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day.** — This is said in allusion to the words of the warning, ch. 4:18. "Lest ye make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it." From this circumstance his name *Achan* seems to have been changed to *Achar*, trouble, i. e., troubler, 1 Chron. 2:7. — *Bush*.

26. **A great heap of stones.** — As a memorial and a warning of his sin and its punishment. — *Maclear*. **Unto this day.** — That is, that remaineth unto this day. — *Bush*. **The Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger.** — God's anger is not an ebullition of blind passion, but a holy displeasure against the unrighteousness of men. When this unrighteousness is removed God's anger ceases. All which has been injuriously said concerning the bloodthirsty and wrathful God of the Old Testament rests on a failure to apprehend this holy displeasure of God against the unrighteousness of men. That brings upon them indeed, judgment and penalty, but never goes so far as to shut up his compassion. — *Fay*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — The capture of Jericho was immediately followed by its complete destruction. This was in accordance with the divine instructions. Only Rahab and her household were excepted; and the two spies whom she had sheltered were sent to convey her and her kindred to a place of safety beyond the camp. A curse was pronounced on any who should pre-

sumptuously dare to rebuild the walls which Jehovah had overthrown (6:21-26). This curse was literally fulfilled in the fate of Hiel, the Bethelite, who rebuilt Jericho in the reign of Ahab (about B. C. 925): his first-born son, Abiram, died as he was laying the foundation, and his youngest son, Segub, while he was setting up the gates (1 Kings 16:34). Nothing was omitted that could enforce on the Israelites the truth that they were fighting not for themselves, but for God; not for wealth or self-aggrandizement, but for Jehovah's glory.

AI, a city near Bethel, was the next object to which Joshua directed his attention. Having sent out a reconnoitring party to obtain information, they returned and reported that, as the inhabitants were not numerous, a small force would suffice, and they recommended their chief to send a body of only three thousand men against it. That number of men was accordingly dispatched on this service. But they had no sooner reached the gate of the town than the inhabitants sallied out and completely routed them, pursuing them a considerable distance, and cutting off thirty-six men (7:2-5). Though the loss in numbers was very small, the repulse spread the utmost consternation and dismay through the camp of Israel. Even Joshua himself was momentarily carried away by the universal panic. Only on this one occasion we find his courage, usually so unshaken, giving place to deepest despondency. We are able, in the light of this fact, to judge how seriously he regarded the repulse, in its disheartening effect upon the people and its bearing on the future of the conflict. This was the first time they had met the Canaanites in actual warfare, and if, almost before a blow was struck, they fled before the warriors of a small town, what would be the issue of the more formidable engagements which were before them?

In this extremity Joshua appealed to God. He cast himself on the ground before the Lord, with his clothes rent, and dust upon his head. The prayer of the prostrate leader is beautiful and appropriate. It is characterized by the same holy boldness which we find in Moses' appeals in like distress, and by a reverential regard for the glory of God (vs. 6-9). His supplication receives an immediate answer, but one of very fearful import. It reminds us of the answer to Moses in a like emergency (Exod. 14:15). It was a time for action, and not for passionate appeal. He was told by the Lord that Israel had sinned; that they had broken His covenant, and taken of the accursed thing; and that the offender must be found and punished; nor would He be with them any more until this was done (vs. 10-15).

Lesson Topics.—I. The Sin of Achan. II. Its Consequences.

I. THE SIN OF ACHAN (vs. 19-21).—Before its capture, the city of Jericho, with all its inhabitants, was "accursed," or "devoted," as the first-fruits of the spoil of Canaan—a thing "most holy to Jehovah;" and the law prescribed that all living beings so devoted should be put to death without redemption,

and all the property destroyed or dedicated to the service of God (Lev. 27: 28, 29; chap. 6: 17). Every man in Israel had been made acquainted with this fact, and had been most solemnly warned to keep himself from the accursed thing, lest he should make himself accursed by the taking of it, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it (6: 18). But in defiance of this solemn warning, Achan, as he went through the city to execute the decree of God, permitted himself to be tempted by "a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight" to disobey the command of the Lord, and to commit a sacrilege against the Most High. This was the sin which had brought defeat upon Israel, and which Joshua brought to light when, in obedience to the divine command, he sought out the sinner and prevailed upon him to confess his crime.

The position of every man resembles that of Achan in this, that he finds himself surrounded by incitements to sin; but each transgression is marked with the impress of a divine prohibition, and branded as an accursed thing too plainly to be mistaken; and infallibly communicates of that curse to those who wilfully touch it. Achan's confession marks the progress of sin, from its first entrance into the heart to its outward commission. The history of his sin in this respect is the history of almost every offence committed against the law of God. There are three steps in the downward course clearly indicated.

1. "*When I saw.*" His description of the Babylonish garment, the number of the shekels of silver, and the weight of the wedge of gold, would indicate an undue familiarity with the forbidden things as the first step in the downfall of Achan. He had evidently turned aside to examine them. Every man must in this world pass through objects which strongly excite him to offend against God, even as the Israelites among the spoils of Jericho. He must go through life without eyes or passions, who, amidst the numberless evils of this perverted world, never looks upon, nor is solicited by an occasion of sin. Temptations come to all. Sin often looks as bright and captivating as the garment and the silver and gold glittered before the eye of Achan. And the god of this world, while he opens wide the eye to behold the exterior attraction of the accursed thing, blinds it to the declarations of the God of truth, and thus leads the soul to ruin. The eye is the great inlet to that mischief which works upon the heart. The senses must be kept under due restraint. To this end we should, like Job, make a covenant with our eyes, that we should not admit evil desires through them to pollute and defile us. The prayer of David should often rise to our lips: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way." We should set the Lord always before us, and then "let our eyes look right onward, and let our eyelids look straight before us," turning neither to the right hand nor to the left "lest the lust of the eyes" ensnare us.

2. "*Then I coveted them.*" Here is another step downwards. Undue familiarity and admiration lead to evil desire. Sin is a

thing of the heart. The law of God may be broken without the outward transgression. The spiritual explanation of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount makes this clear. Murder may be the enmity of the spirit, adultery the impurity of the heart. We mistake if we think nothing evil which is confined within the recesses of our hearts. Human authority can only take cognizance of the external act. But the authority of God is not so limited. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth." He "looketh upon the heart." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." If we would please God, therefore, we must keep our hearts with all diligence. It is not enough that the stream of evil gushes not forth to the light; its fountain must be dried up in the heart. Thence proceed evil thoughts, and all that terrible array of mischief, sin, and sorrow which our Lord has so forcibly described. It rarely happens that the evil stops with the indulgence of wrong desire. It is generally consummated. Such was the experience of Achan.

3. "*And took them.*" This is the final step. When the soul is led captive in the bonds of evil desire, the result is scarcely doubtful. Some promise of secrecy, some assurance of delight, some favorable opportunity, some removal of restraints, some violent temptations of Satan, will be cast before the endangered bond-servant, and he will yield and fall into the commission of the outward sin. Sin is insidious in its mournful progress. Be warned against it. Avoid the persons, the places, the amusements, the books which would lead you into temptation. If seduction should assail you, endeavor to realize the presence of the Lord, the terrors, and the mercies of his love. So that when the temptor aims his fiercest and most powerful temptations you may be able to turn it aside, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

II. ITS CONSEQUENCES (vs. 22-26). "Lust," as we have seen, "when it hath conceived, beareth sin;" but the sad process does not stop here; for "sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15). Achan's sin was far-reaching in its consequences. He was not merely his own enemy, but the enemy of the tribes among whom he dwelt.

1. *It brought sorrow, defeat, and death to Israel.* His iniquity was visited upon his people. "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have taken of the accursed thing: therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies because they were accursed." Wonderful is the power of one individual for good or evil. The history of the world furnishes many instances of a solitary individual influencing whole communities and generations of men. Sometimes we find a really great and good man, by quickening words and noble deeds, breathing a spirit into his age, which, like the vital air of spring, touches everything into new life; and sometimes, on the other hand, a vile, vicious spirit blighting everything into the wild waste of winter. None liveth unto himself. We are constantly influencing others for weal or woe. How careful then ought we to

live ! The sin of this one man brought darkness and distress upon all Israel. One sin of one individual may injure a whole community. That men do suffer for other people's sin is a fact which no one can dispute — a fact not merely recorded in the Bible, but written on almost every page of human history. This fact must immensely increase the heinousness of sin, and the responsibility of the sinner.

2. *It brought destruction upon himself.* For a time Achan would indulge in the guilty and covetous joy of possessing the fruits of his crime. He doubtless congratulated himself upon his success. But the Israelites were summoned before the Lord, and the hour of recompense was at hand. The lot is cast, and the tribe of Judah is taken ; then the family of the Zarahites ; then the household of Zabdi ; then Achan, the son of Carmi, is found, and stands among the thousands of Israel, pointed out by the unerring finger of God, as the man who had taken the accursed thing, and made himself a curse to his people. He who flatters himself that he can sin with impunity, flatters himself with a dangerous lie. "Be sure your sin will find you out," probably before men, certainly in that day when the thousands of Israel who surrounded Achan will be as a drop of water to the ocean, compared with the countless multitudes of the human race. Every secret sin will then shine as clearly before the eye of God as the sun appears in the unclouded heavens. And sin will be punished. As Achan perished for his sin so will every impenitent sinner perish. "These shall go away into eternal punishment." Where *then* was Achan's joy in the accursed thing ? Where, in the last great day, shall be the pleasure which the wicked took in the toys and trifles for which they have been contented to barter their eternal peace ? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul." "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" Let the fate of Achan warn us to flee temptation, as Absalom's brethren fled from the feast, when they saw their brother Amnon murdered at the table for his offense. If you have already ventured upon the dark and downward way of wilful transgression, let the example of this lost Israelite meet and stop you in your sad career ; even as they who pursued Abner stood still when they saw the bloody body of Asahel in the path before them.

JULY 29, 1883.]

LESSON V.

[JOSHUA 8:30-35.]

THE READING OF THE LAW.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing."—Deut. 30:19.

TIME.—B.C. 1451. **PLACE.**—Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, near Shechem.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

30. Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal,

the Lord commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses,

31. As Moses the servant of the Lord, an altar of whole stones,

30. Then Joshua built an altar.—Joshua improved the first possible opportunity to obey the commandment of Moses, which required Israel, "on the day when they passed over Jordan," (Deut. 27:2) to do what is here recorded. Of course the commandment, literally understood, imposed an impossibility, for Mount Ebal could not be reached by the Israelitish camp on the very day they crossed the Jordan. The spirit and import of the commandment were that the first possible opportunity be taken for it. Jericho and Ai were the centres of two powerful kingdoms that lay directly in the way from the Jordan to Mount Ebal, and these must first be conquered. Then, as the miraculous passage of the Jordan had so awed the Canaanites that Joshua could circumcise the people and celebrate the Passover unmolested in the plains of Jericho, so the destruction of Ai enabled him to proceed at once to Mount Ebal, and without opposition erect the memorial altar there.—*Terry*. **Mount Ebal.**—A mountain in Palestine opposite Mount Gerizim, in the northern part of Ephraim, on the northern side of the valley of Shechem. In the valley between Ebal and Gerizim lies Shechem, the modern *Nablus*. Ebal rises 2,700 feet above the level of the sea, Gerizim 2,600. That the voice is audible from one of these mountains to the other has frequently been proved by actual experiment; the valley at the eastern end being not more than sixty rods wide.—*Whitney*.

31. Altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lifted up any iron.—So the law required in general (Ex. 20:25); so it had been specially ordained for this case (Deut. 27:5, 6).—*Fay*. **Burnt offerings.**—The burnt offering, or whole burnt offering, or *perfect sacrifice*, was so called because the victim was wholly consumed by fire upon the altar of burnt offering, and so, as it were, sent up to God on the wings of fire. This idea, which is expressed in the account of Noah's sacrifice (Gen. 8:21), and which constantly recurs, both in the Scriptures and in profane authors, is implied in the Hebrew word which signifies to ascend. The sacrifice was a memorial of God's covenant, and signified that the offerer belonged wholly to God, and that he dedicated himself soul and body to him, and placed his life at his disposal. **Sacrificed peace**

over which no man hath lifted up *any* iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings.

32. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.

33. And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests and Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim,

offerings.—The peace offering was not an atoning sacrifice to make peace with God, but a joyful celebration of *peace made* through the covenant. They were slain with the same ceremonies as the burnt offering, but only a part was burnt upon the altar.—*Wm. Smith.*

32. **Wrote there upon the stones.**—Upon comparing this with the injunction, Deut. 27 : 2-7, it appears quite obvious that in addition to the altar they were required also to erect a number of stone pillars, and that the writing was to be done upon the pillars, instead of upon the altar, for which purpose they were previously to be plastered over.—*Bush.* At first thought this would seem to lack the chief quality of a memorial, durability. But travellers in the east assert that such inscriptions are as lasting as those cut in the rock.—*Steele.* A careful examination of Deut. 27 : 4, 8, and Josh. 8 : 30-32, will lead to the opinion that the law was *written upon*, or *in*, the plaster with which these pillars were coated. This could be done, and such writing was common in ancient times. I have seen numerous specimens of it certainly *two thousand years old*, and still as distinct as when they were first inscribed on the plaster. In this hot climate, where there is no frost to dissolve the cement, it will continue hard and unbroken for thousands of years.—*Dr. Thomson.* **A copy of the law.**—Heb. : *a repetition, a duplicate of the law.* That is, a copy of the blessings and curses commanded by Moses; not a copy of the Decalogue, as some imagine; nor of the book of Deuteronomy, as others think; much less of the whole Pentateuch; but simply that part of the law which contained the blessings and curses, and which was to be read on this solemn occasion.—*Bush.*

33. **All Israel . . . stood on this side the ark and on that side.**—We must imagine the position of the people to have been such that the priests with the ark of the covenant stood in the midst of the valley, between Ebal lying on the north and Gerizim lying on the south, but the people, one-half over against Gerizim (therefore on Ebal), and the other half over against Ebal (therefore on Gerizim).—*Fay.* **As well the stranger.**—The entire body of Israelites, by descent and by adoption, were present. The latter were more commonly called *proselytes*, but sometimes *strangers*. **Over against Mount Gerizim.**—The multitudes did not stand on the summits of the mountains, but on their slopes. That they could all hear when thus standing is sufficiently attested by modern travellers.—*Steele.* The vale of Shechem is far from broad, not exceeding in places a few hundred feet.—*Stanley.* The acoustic properties of this valley are interesting. A single voice might

and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.

34. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, accord-

ing to all that is written in the book of the law.

35. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.

be heard by many thousands, shut in and conveyed up and down by the enclosing hills. In the early morning we could not only see from Gerizim a man driving his ass down a path on Mount Ebal, but could hear every word he uttered as he urged him on; and, in order to test the matter more certainly, on a subsequent occasion two of our party stationed themselves on opposite sides of the valley, and with perfect ease recited the commandments antiphonally. — *Tristram*. **That they should bless the people.** — And curse also, though the last is not expressly mentioned; it is however plainly to be inferred, both from the original command of Moses, Deut. 27:13, and from the phraseology of the next verse. — *Bush*. The blessing was to be uttered by the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin, who sprang from the two wives of Jacob; and the curse by Reuben, with the two sons of Leah's maid Zilpah, and by Zebulun, with Dan and Naphtali, the sons of Rachel's maid Bilhah. — *Keil*.

34. **Afterward he read . . . the law.** — Caused the priests or Levites to read it (Deut. 27:14). Persons are often said in Scripture to do that which they only command to be done. — *J. F. & B*. **All the words of the law, the blessings and cursings.** — Nothing more is probably to be understood than in the formulas given Deut. 27:14 ff. The curses are exactly twelve, according to the number of the tribes; the blessings, see Deut. 28:1-14. . . . It is consistent with the divine economy of salvation in the time of the old covenant, that on the entrance of the chosen people into the promised land, not merely blessing but also curse was held up before them. A people standing so low in morality as the Israelites then did needed stern discipline, and not only might be allured by promises but must be alarmed by threats. — *Fay*.

35. **With the women and the little ones.** — It was a word that concerned *all*, and all of sexes and ages were present, giving a solemn and heedful attention to what was read. Children would be deeply impressed by the solemnities of the scene, and a salutary fear of offending God would sink into their tender hearts. — **The strangers that were conversant among them.** Heb.: *the stranger that walked among them*. Proselytes. No other strangers can well be supposed to have been present at this time. — *Bush*. How awfully solemn must have been the assemblage of the dense multitude and the sublime ceremony of the occasion! The eye and ear of the people being both addressed, it was calculated to leave an indelible impression; and with spirits elevated by their brilliant victories in the land of promise, memory would often revert to the striking scene on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, and in the vale of Shechem. — *J. F. & B*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction.—The sin of Achan having been punished, Jehovah encouraged Joshua to proceed with the conquest. He seems to have needed an express command from God, and a renewed assurance of success, before he could shake off the discouragement of the late events, and prepare himself for action. "Fear not," said the Lord to him, "neither be thou dismayed; arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city and his land" (v. 1). Accordingly Joshua set out from Gilgal, and on reaching the neighborhood of Ai detached five thousand men to place themselves during the night in ambush behind it. Meanwhile he himself, with the rest of his army, took up a position on an eminence north of the town. Early the following morning he descended into the valley, and the king of Ai no sooner detected them than he advanced with all his forces to the encounter. Thereupon the Israelites feigned a retreat, and were hotly pursued toward the desert of the Jordan, while at the signal of Joshua's uplifted spear the ambuscade rushed into Ai and set it on fire. The smoke of their city ascending up to heaven was the first announcement to the inhabitants of the success of the stratagem of their foes. Attacked before and behind, they were utterly routed. Instead of the whole booty being burned, as at Jericho, the soldiers were rewarded with the ordinary spoils of victory (vs. 2-29). This victory secured to Israel the necessary passes into the interior of the country, and Joshua determined to take advantage of the terror which the success of his arms had inspired in the hearts of the Canaanites to carry out the command touching the ratification of the law on the mountains Ebal and Gerizim. Thither, therefore, the host repaired.

Lesson Topics.—I. The Altar Built. II. The Law Written. III. The Law Read.

I. THE ALTAR BUILT (vs. 30, 31).—The first intimation of the solemn service now about to be performed is found in Deut. 11:29. "And it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal." This intimation was afterward made specific (Deut. 27; 28:1-14). Following the general direction (Exod. 20: 24, 25), the altar was commanded to be built of "whole stones," upon which no "iron tool" had been used, and upon this altar two kinds of sacrifices were to be offered (Deut. 27:5-7). These directions were strictly obeyed by Joshua on this occasion. Having built the altar, he offered thereon—

1. *Burnt-offerings.* This was the most dignified of all the sacrifices, and at the same time the most frequent. It comprised in itself, to a large extent, what belonged to the other sacrifices, and might be regarded as embodying the general idea

of sacrifice. Like all the offerings of the Mosaic economy, it was not merely an outward observance which justified the offerer by the mere fact of his obedience. "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." The sacrifices were all symbolical and typical. The object of the burnt-offering was to express entire self-consecration to God on the part of the offerer. It was adapted and designed to convey to the mind of the devout worshipper an impression of the importance of self-devotement to the Most High, and to give expression to that feeling. In the consumption of the whole offering, after the outpouring of the blood for his acceptance, the offerer, if he entered at all into the spirit of the service, saw expressed his own dedication of himself, soul and body, to the service of God — self-dedication following upon, and growing out of, pardon and acceptance with God. It is easy to see how appropriate was the burnt-offering in the case of Israel on this occasion. Nothing could be more fitting than that at the beginning of their possession of the Promised Land, and in connection with the ratification of the law, the people should consecrate themselves anew to God.

Indeed, this duty is always timely. Christ was here, as always, the end of the law, and realized to the full what the burnt-offering thus symbolized. In so far as it expressed the dedication of the offerer to God for all holy working and fruitfulness in well-doing, the symbol met with unspeakably its highest realization in Him who came not to do His own will, but the will of the Father that sent Him. Self-consecration to God is the imperative duty, as it is the glorious privilege, of each one of us. Jesus Christ is not only our sacrifice, he is also our example. In the former relation he stands alone — no man can share with him either in the burden or the glory of his work. But in the spirit of self-dedication and holy obedience which animated him throughout the whole of his undertaking, he appears as our example, and we are commanded to follow in his footsteps.

2. *Peace offerings.* These were the most joyous of all the sacrifices. They were principally thank offerings. They expressed the worshippers' feelings of adoring gratitude on account of some particular manifestation of the divine goodness. Here also the appropriateness of the service to the circumstances of the people is obvious. God had led them and fed them through all their wilderness wanderings, and in his own good time he had brought them into the Promised Land. Their advent into it had been signalized by mighty and gracious displays of his power on their behalf. How fitting that they should offer thanksgiving to the Most High. Special mercies call for special expressions of gratitude. These offerings, taken together, reveal to us the spirit in which Joshua would have the people enter upon the ratification of the law for which they were now gathered.

II. THE LAW WRITTEN (v. 32). The command of Moses was this: "And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over

Jordan unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster. And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee. Therefore it shall be, when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in Mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster. And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly" (Deut. 27: 2-4, 8). From these directions it will be seen that the law was to be written, not on the stones of the altar, as the language of our lesson-text might be understood, but upon "great stones," which the people were to "set up" and "plaster them with plaster," as a preparation for the purpose which they were to serve. What is meant by the phrase, "all the words of this law," is uncertain. It is impossible that what was to be written could be a transcript of the whole law, and very improbable that the command covered the whole of the book of Deuteronomy, though each of these views has its advocates. Others there are who think it was confined to the strictly legislative portions of the Pentateuch, and still others to the Decalogue. There are many who connect this statement here simply with the blessings and cursings recorded in connection with the original command (Deut. 27: 15-26; 28: 1-14). This seems the most reasonable conclusion. These are in themselves an epitome of the whole law. They were thus written out that the eye as well as the ear of the people might contribute to the impression sought to be made on their minds.

III. THE LAW READ (vs. 33-35). The valley enclosed by Ebal and Gerizim is about three miles long, and about three hundred yards wide. The articulations of the human voice are, from the purity of the atmosphere, heard distinctly on the opposite heights, as has been testified by numerous travellers. The slopes of the two mountains recede gradually, and afford room for hundreds of thousands to stand or sit conveniently to hear the words of the law. Half of the assembled tribes took their places on Ebal, and the other half on Gerizim. In the intermediate valley stood the priests and Levites with the ark, surrounded by the elders, officers, and judges, with Joshua at their head. Of the blessings and cursings of the law each was then read aloud by the Levites, and as they read, to each curse the six tribes on Ebal responded with a loud *Amen*, and to each blessing the assembled thousands on Gerizim similarly testified their assent. Thus the people acknowledged their obligation to the law, and the righteousness of the punishments denounced upon the breach of it. A more impressive ceremony, or one fuller of the truest elements of grandeur, can hardly be imagined. These blessings and cursings are connected, not with ceremonial, but with moral law. They still stand. Study them. Blessing or cursing, which? we must choose for ourselves. If we obey, we are blessed; if we disobey, we are cursed.

AUG. 5, 1883.]

LESSON VI.

[JOSHUA 20:1-9.]

THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." — Heb. 6:18.

TIME. — B.C. 1444. **PLACE.** — Shiloh.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. The Lord also spake unto Joshua, saying, | you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: |
| 2. Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for | |

1. **The Lord also spake unto Joshua.** — As soon as the tribes had received the portion of their inheritance, the Lord directed that Joshua should carry out the injunctions which Moses had left respecting the Cities of Refuge for the accidental homicide. — *Maclear.*

2. **Appoint out for you cities of refuge.** — The sentiment of justice impels uncultivated men to the immediate inflicting of punishment upon those who give offence to that sentiment by a wrong act, especially the act of taking human life. But a man may accidentally slay his fellow-man. The safeguard of law is therefore needed that vengeance may not hastily wreak itself on the guiltless. In ordinary cases, in highly-civilized lands, there is such a respect for law that the manslayer is screened from summary punishment, and is intrusted to the courts for trial. But where the veneration for law is not strong (especially as was the case among the Hebrews, who had so recently been in the house of bondage), where might and not right is the law, the slayer of a brother man would not be safe in the hands of his outraged and excited neighbors. Hence cities of refuge at convenient distances were appointed. In the wilderness and, up to this time, in Canaan, the tabernacle of the Lord seems, from Exod. 21:14, to have answered for a place of refuge for the man guilty of homicide; but in the time of Moses commandment was given by God to appoint such cities of refuge in the land of Canaan. — *Steele.*

An inspection of the map will show how wisely those places were chosen, so as to make a city of refuge easy of access from all parts of the land. The roads leading to these cities were to be kept in good repair; no hillock was left, no river or stream was allowed over which there was not a bridge; the road was to be at least two-and-thirty cubits broad, and every kind of obstruction was to be removed that might hurt his foot or hinder his speed. At every turning or branching of roads, posts were erected bearing the words, REFUGE! REFUGE! to guide the fugitive in his flight; so benign and considerate was the provision made for the benefit of the accidental slayer of his fellow-man. — *Bush.*

Whereof I spake unto you. — The general directions on this subject will be found in (a) Exod. 21:13; (b) Num. 35:9 ff.; (c) Deut. 19:2. The reference to them here is one of the numerous instances in which the book of Joshua presupposes the existence of the Pentateuch. — *Maclear.*

3. That the slayer that kill-eth *any* person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.

4. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of

the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.

By the hand of Moses. — By the agency, by the ministry of Moses; by him as an organ of communication. — *Bush.*

3. **Unawares and unwittingly.** — Heb.: *bishgagah, through ignorance, error, and mistake, and without knowledge.* The conditions are stated with the *utmost explicitness*, in words amounting almost to repetition, as is evidently proper where a matter of so much consequence as the life of a human being is concerned. In cases of *wilful* murder no place whatever could afford protection. A man might be taken even from the temple, or the horns of the altar, Ex. 21:14; 2 Kings 2:31, 34. — *Bush.* In contradistinction to the customs of the Greeks and Romans, and even of the Middle Ages, which made places of sanctuary available to *criminals of every kind*, the Jewish law-giver reserved them for unintentional acts of murder, and for these alone. The distinguishing marks of such acts are clearly laid down in Num. 35:25-44; Deut. 19:4-6. **Avenger of blood.** — Prior to the Mosaic age, it was required of the nearest of kin, as a matter of duty, to avenge the death of a slain relative. He was called *Goel*, or *Avenger*, and, together with his office, inherited the property of the deceased. It was the aim of the Mosaic law, without altogether abolishing their long-established custom, to mitigate its evils as far as possible. — *Maclear.*

4. **Shall stand at the entering of the gate.** — Not, *i. e.*, outside the gate of the city, but in the forum, or public place of judgment (comp. Ruth 4:1, 2). — *Maclear.* The gate was surmounted by an arch, or by beams which held the massive wall above. The gateway was thus sheltered from sun and storm. It was a convenient place for the session of the judges, and was habitually used by them. Its publicity also tended to prevent abuses of their authority. The gateway of the city of refuge was probably attended, night and day, by men whose duty it was to receive and take charge of fugitives. — *Johnson.* **Shall declare his cause.** Shall give a true, honest, and exact statement of all the circumstances under which the accident occurred. **They shall take him into the city** — Provided they are satisfied, from his relation of the facts, that he is innocent. **That he may dwell among them.** — It may be asked why, if the proper judges were satisfied of his innocence of the crime of wilful murder, he were not at once dismissed from their jurisdiction, and suffered to go at large as usual. The proper reply doubtless is, (1) That he might still be in danger from the enraged passions of the pursuer. (2) He was to await the issue of another trial, (verse 6.) (3) His detention was probably designed as somewhat of a punishment for the rashness or heedlessness to which the homicide was owing. Something of a penalty was to be paid for carelessness as well as for crime. — *Bush.*

5. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbor unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.

6. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment,

and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

7. And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in

5. **They shall not deliver the slayer.** — Strictly speaking, the elders of the city of refuge never delivered even a criminal directly to the avenger; they delivered him to the elders of his own city, who in turn delivered him to the avenger after he had been taken home; so that no execution took place in the city of refuge (Deut. 19 : 11, 12). — *Johnson*.

6. **Until he stands before the congregation for judgment.** — In order to a still greater security for the interests of justice, and to guard with the utmost vigilance against a wrong decision, another hearing seems to have been appointed, after a considerable interval, and before a larger court, whose verdict was to be final in the case. It is probable that the "congregation" here spoken of was that of his own city, or the people at large, who were also allowed to constitute a tribunal, and to sit in judgment on the case. — *Bush*. **Until the death of the high priest.** — This does not mean that the death of the high priest takes place at the same time with the summons to trial. The only occasion on which an innocent manslayer may leave the refuge are, 1st, temporarily, for a trial where the manslaying occurred; and 2d, permanently, at the death of the high priest. Why should he be released when the high priest dies? Probably because he was anointed as the representative and mediator of the people, who alone was able to offer annual expiation for the whole people. His death, therefore, may be regarded as an atonement prefiguring the death of our heavenly High Priest, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God (Heb. 9 : 14, 15). — *Steele*.

7. **And they appointed.** — Rather, they *sanctified, set apart for a sacred purpose*. The cities of refuge were intended to preserve the people and the land of Jehovah from blood-guiltiness. Hence the appointment to so high a purpose carried with it also the idea of solemn consecration. — *Maclear*. **Kedesh.** — An ancient Canaanitish town, allotted to the tribe of Naphtali, and subsequently assigned to the Gershonite Levites. It seems to have been a "sanctuary" of the old Canaanites; and the Israelites, while they retained the name denoting its character, made it in some respects their sanctuary also. — *Whitney*, **In Galilee.** — In that part of the province afterwards called "Galilee." This name, which in the Roman age was applied to a large province, seems to have been originally confined to a little "circuit" or "region" *Galil, Galilah, Galilæa* — round Kedesh-Naphtali, in which were situated the twenty towns given by Solomon to Hiram, King of Tyre, as payment for the transportation of timber from Lebanon to Jerusalem (1

mount Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.

8. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.

9. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth any person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.

Kings 9: 10). — *Maclear*. Shechem lay in the narrow valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, in Samaria, in the tribe of Ephraim, being distant from Jerusalem thirty-four miles north, and from Samaria seven miles south. Hebron, the oldest town in Palestine, situated among the mountains of Judah, twenty Roman miles south of Jerusalem, and the same distance north of Beersheba. — *Whitney*. The three cities of refuge west of the Jordan thus lay so distributed that one (Kedesh) was found in the north, one (Shechem) in the centre, and one (Hebron) in the southern part of the land. — *Fay*.

8. On the other side of Jordan. — The two-and-a-half tribes east of the Jordan had as many as the western tribes, because they were scattered over a territory nearly as large. — *By Jericho*. — Literally, *Beyond Jordan, Jericho eastward*. The sense is, the side of Jordan opposite from Jericho. These eastern cities were appointed by Moses. Deut. 4: 41-43. — *Steele*. Bezar, a town of Reuben, allotted to the Merarites. It is barely possible that it corresponds with a village called Burazin, twelve miles north of east from Heshbon. Ramoth in Gilead, called also Ramah, one of the chief cities of Gad, east of the Jordan, and allotted to the Levites; the scene of many sieges and battles in the struggles between the Israelites and the Syrians. Golan, a city of Bashan in the half-tribe of Manasseh. Its site is not known; but it doubtless gave its name to the district east of Jordan called Gaulonitis. — *Whitney*.

9. For the stranger that sojourneth. — Observe that the Mosaic Law applied its merciful provisions not only to the members of the elect nation, as though they were a sacred "caste," but to the "stranger" also that sojourned among them. The existence of such a class of "naturalized foreigners" in Israel is easily accounted for: (a) *The "mixed multitude"* that came out of Egypt (Exod. 12: 38) formed one element; (b) *The remains of the Canaanites* — never wholly extirpated — formed a second; (c) *Captives taken in war* formed a third; (d) *Fugitives, hired servants, merchants*, formed a fourth. The census of these in Solomon's time gave a return of 153,600 males (2 Chron. 2: 17), which was nearly equal to about a tenth of the whole population. — *Maclear*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — On their return to Gilgal after the ratification of the law, the Israelites were met by an embassy from

Gibeon. Panic-stricken at the fall of Jericho and Ai, and hopeless of resistance, the Gibeonites determined, if possible, to make a league with Israel, that at least they might save their lives. By the employment of craft they succeeded. When their duplicity was exposed they were reduced to the condition of bondmen, and made "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord (chap. 9). News of these events having reached the ears of the southern kings, they resolved to attack the recreant city, and five powerful chiefs marched against it. The Gibeonites sent tidings of their peril to Joshua, who by a forced march suddenly burst upon the Amorite kings as they lay encamped before the city, and drove them before him along the rocky ascent leading to Upper Beth-horon, about four miles distant. They cross the ridge, and in headlong flight rush down the precipitous descent that leads to Lower Beth-horon. There a fierce tempest burst on the fugitives and completed their discomfiture. Standing on the summit of Upper Beth-horon Joshua watched the foe flying in confusion. The Lord had already delivered them into his hands, and time only was needed to complete the rout. But the day was far advanced, and he feared the Canaanites might yet make good their escape. Then, "in the sight of Israel," Joshua uttered that bold apostrophe, that magnificent venture of faith. "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon." God honored the confidence of his servant, and in the lengthened afternoon the stern work was completed. Such was the issue of the eventful battle of Beth-horon. It sealed the fate of every important city of Southern Palestine. One after another they fell before the victorious Israelites (chap. 10). The turn of Northern Palestine was now come. A powerful confederacy was formed under Jabin, whose capital, Hazor, was the principal fortress in that part of the country, determined to make a last effort to defeat the Israelites. Again Joshua set out on a forced march, and burst upon the combined armies of the northern chiefs as they were encamped by the waters of Merom. As before, his attack was irresistible, and the overthrow of his enemy complete. This was the last of Joshua's recorded engagements (chap. 11 : 1-14). We are told no more than that the war with the kings lasted "a long time." Seven years were employed in the complete reduction of the land. By this time the seven nations of the Canaanites, properly so-called, had been entirely vanquished. Thirty-one kings had fallen by the sword. Joshua had taken "the whole land according to all that the Lord had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war (11 : 15-23 ; 12). At length, when stricken in years, Joshua was commanded to divide the land among the tribes. Much unconquered territory yet "remained to be possessed" (13 : 1), but he was directed by Jehovah to apportion the whole, in reliance on his promise to aid the people to complete the conquest if they continued faithful and obedient. The apportionment was

mainly by lot ; though in certain cases unconquered districts were also assigned to those who had strength and courage to make them their own. One of these cases was that of the aged Caleb (14 : 6-15). One tribe alone received no share in this allotment. Devoted to the service of the Sanctuary, the tribe of Levi depended on tithes of the produce of the land and cattle. But besides this, from each tribe four cities with their suburban pastures, or forty-eight in all, were set apart for it. These included the six cities of refuge, three on each side of the Jordan.

Lesson Topics.—I. The Necessity. II. The Purpose. III. The Appointment.

I. THE NECESSITY. This grew out of the custom of blood revenge, or revenge for killing another. This custom had its root in the old and universal principle, that the man who does wrong to his fellow must, somehow, be made to suffer for it. And as the greatest wrong ordinarily that can be perpetrated is maliciously to take the life of another, it has been generally recognized by men as the demand of natural justice that the penal equivalent for murder is the forfeited life of the slayer. This was the divine law issued to Noah and his family shortly after the deluge. In that legislation the plain requirement was *blood for blood*. Even the brute animals were to be held responsible for the blood of man, although not for that of similar animals. And as for the human, "whoso sheddeth *man's* blood, by *man* shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9 : 5, 6). In the Mosaic legislation the deliberate murderer must himself be slain, without any possible ransom or substitute—his own blood alone can compensate for that which his hands have shed. In patriarchal times, and on down to the final establishment of civil institutions, all injuries to the family were avenged by its members. The law of retaliation was in full force, and its swift and stern execution was deemed essential to self-preservation. When one was killed the next of kin was bound to become the avenger of his blood. With the inheritance of the property of the deceased he inherited this duty of avenging his death. He was permitted to slay the homicide without notice, openly or secretly, wherever he might find him. This condition of things was by no means confined to the Hebrew people. It was in some of the other nations a requirement of their religion to avenge the death of a kinsman ; to neglect it was not simply to be a coward, but also immoral and irreligious. For the man who failed in this duty there was no honor in this world and no reward in the next.

Moses found this custom of blood revenge existing among the Israelites, and, as in many other cases, under the divine direction he regulated that which, in the condition of society at the time, he could not abolish. The way was thus prepared for better things. The great injustice of this custom lay in the fact that it made no difference between the unintentional manslayer and the wilful murderer. Some provision was needed, if this

injustice were to be obviated, which would shield the victim from the avenger, and lodge the decision as to the character of the killing in some impartial tribunal.

II. THE PURPOSE. The law of refuge was established, and the cities of refuge appointed for the purpose of shielding the man who claimed that his killing of another was unintentional, and securing for him an impartial hearing. It was no part of their purpose to shelter wilful murderers. The old Noachian law of a life for a life, or the death penalty for murder, had been re-enacted as a part of the national code of the Hebrews, and was reaffirmed in connection with this appointment. There was in it, therefore, no relaxation of the law against the crime of murder. Even the altar itself was no refuge for the wilful murderer (Exod. 21 : 14). But the man who is so unfortunate as to be the unintentional cause of another's death should not be punished as a murderer. These provisions were made for his benefit. The law of Moses was the first to recognize the difference between wilful and accidental killing, and to teach that punishment should not be inflicted for unintentional slaying (Exod. 21 : 13). Eight hundred years after Moses' time Draco undertook to do for the Athenians what this law of refuge did for the Hebrews. He found a condition of things in which the doom of the manslayer was to die for his deed, without the allowance of any qualifying or justifying circumstances whatever, and he established a tribunal consisting of fifty-one elders, who sat in four different courts — one for cases of accidental homicide, a second for justifiable homicide, and two others for killing under certain other circumstances. Thus it appears, contrary to the notions of many modern critics, that the Hebrew code, so far from being cruel, was greatly in advance of its times. For while the avenger of blood among the Israelites must continue to perform his time-honored duty, the manslayer was relieved in a measure by these cities especially appropriated to his use as places of security against the vindictive pursuer.

III. THE APPOINTMENT. — The earliest intimation of such asylums is contained in the promise, "I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee" (Exod. 21 : 13). The following particulars were given later: (1) There were to be six cities of the Levites set apart, three on each side of Jordan (Num. 35 : 6, 13, 14). (2) "A way," or road was to be prepared to each of these cities, so that the fugitive might the more easily reach the refuge (Deut. 19 : 3). (3) Once within their gates; the refugee was to have a fair hearing. If it appeared that the killing was unintentional he was to be protected, but if the killing was wilful he was to be handed over to the avenger (Num. 35 : 24, 25; Deut. 19 : 11-13). (4) The safety of the fugitive was to depend on his abiding in the city, where he was virtually a prisoner, till the death of the high priest (Num. 35 : 26-28). Such, in the main, were the regulations made by Moses, in accordance with which Joshua now appointed the cities of refuge.

That these cities of refuge were *intended* as material representations or types of the spiritual protection which the gospel of Christ provides for the sinner is very doubtful. But it is very clear that these arrangements strikingly illustrate in many particulars the way of salvation through the Redeemer. It is probable that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews had this Hebrew institution in view when he speaks of those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." These provisions for refuge may serve to illustrate —

1. *The divine origin of the gospel.* The whole of these arrangements were not the inventions of a human philanthropy, but were established by God himself. This truth is made prominent wherever allusion is made to the law, or the cities of refuge. This is eminently true of the gospel refuge, and is also held clearly before the mind. God is the author of our salvation. His love is the moving principle in it all. "He spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all."

2. *The security it offers.* The manslayer was in imminent peril. The avenger of blood was at his heels, but he was safe the very moment he passed the threshold of the city gates. The sinner is in danger. It would be impossible to exaggerate the magnitude of his peril. He is condemned already, and the avenger is on his track. But the moment he enters the gospel refuge, the moment he casts his helpless soul on Christ, he is safe.

3. *Its availability.* The cities of refuge were available for all. They were never so full as to turn any away. They lay within the reach of all. They were so located as to be easily accessible from every part of the land. The roads to them were kept good, the rivers spanned with bridges, and the rough places made plain, so that there was no obstruction to the man fleeing for his life. They were plainly pointed out to all. Finger-posts were planted along the roads, with the word "Refuge! Refuge!" written on them. Every facility was rendered. So it is with the gospel of Christ. Its word is ever "and yet there is room." It is within the reach of all. The way is plainly marked out. "Whosoever will come, may come," and find a refuge and a rest.

4. *The gospel is the only way of salvation.* The cities of refuge were the exclusive asylums for the manslayers. If the homicide stopped short, or ran elsewhere, he was in danger. No other city could protect him. So in Jesus Christ we have the only way of salvation open to us. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

5. *The gospel conditions of salvation.* The fact that these cities were appointed would save no man from the avenger, unless by suitable effort he reached them. The effort on his part must be individual, instant, intelligent, strenuous, and persevering. Here are the qualities necessary in order that we may find refuge in Christ. The gospel will save those, and only those, who meet its conditions and live by its principles.

AUG. 12, 1883.]

LESSON VII.

[JOSHUA 24 : 14-29.]

THE LAST DAYS OF JOSHUA.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." — Verse 15.

TIME. — B.C. 1426. **PLACE.** — Shechem.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

14. Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your

14. **Now therefore.** — The address of Joshua to Israel has thus far been occupied with a recital of the leading events of their national history, events going to show, in the most striking manner, the interposition of the divine hand in their behalf. He would thus lay a foundation for that deep sense of obligation and obedience, which he aims in the remainder of his discourse to impress upon their minds. From this point, therefore, he begins a practical application of the various facts he had before enumerated, turning the whole into a powerful appeal to the consciences and the hearts of his hearers. — *Bush.* **Fear the Lord.** — Reverence him as the sole object of your religious worship. **Serve him.** — Perform his will by obeying his commands. **In sincerity.** — Having your whole heart engaged in his worship. — **And in truth.** — According to the directions he has given you in his infallible word. — *Clarke.* **Put away the gods which your fathers served.** — Many expositors hold that these words do not necessarily imply the actual possession of idols by the people, but rather a tendency to idolatry, which was ever too painfully prominent in Israel until after the Babylonish exile. The spirit of the exhortation is, according to this view, well conveyed by *Bush*. "*Keep away, renounce, repudiate, have nothing to do with, idolatry of any sort; being equivalent to a charge to preserve themselves pure from a contagion to which they were peculiarly liable.*" Subsequent history shows how they failed. But it is scarcely supposable, that if Joshua meant to warn them merely against tendencies to idolatry he would have used the words here employed, and those still stronger ones in verse 23, *Put away the strange gods that are among you* — the very words used by Jacob when his household gave up their strange gods, and he buried them at Shechem. (Gen. 35 : 2). Better, then, to understand that many of the Hebrews had still in their houses teraphim — the gods which the ancient fathers worshipped beyond the Euphrates. Laban had them in his family (Gen. 30 : 19), and Rachel carried them off, and they were probably the strange gods buried at Shechem (Gen. 35 : 2-4). We again meet with them in the days of the Judges (Judges 17 : 5, 18 : 20), and in the time of David, and even in his house (1 Sam. 19 : 13); and also in the time of Josiah, who tried to put them away (2 Kings 23 : 24). It is therefore by no means improbable that among many families in Israel these teraphim were zealously kept, and Joshua, knowing the fact

fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

16. And the people answered and said, God forbid

that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;

17. For the Lord our God, *he it is* that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

18. And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites, which

and the danger of it, called this assembly and especially urged this matter, in order to abolish, if possible, this evil. — *Terry*. **On the other side of the flood.** — Beyond the great river Euphrates in the land of Mesopotamia. — **In Egypt.** — This false worship of the Israelites is implied in other passages, as Ezek. 20 : 7, 8 ; Amos 5 : 26. — *Davey*.

15. **If it seem evil in your eyes.** — Unjust, unreasonable, or attended with too many inconveniences. — *Bush*. **Choose you this day.** — Service of God in sincerity and truth can only result from a free and willing allegiance of the heart. This accordingly is what Joshua invites, as Moses had done before him (cf. Deut. 30 : 15, *sqq.*) — *Cook*. Joshua assumes an important truth — man cannot be godless ; if he repudiates the true God, he will fall under the baleful influence of some false religion. He cannot divest himself of his religious nature. Jehovah will not share with any idol the worship of his people ; every god must be dethroned before he will reign in their hearts. — *Steele*. **As for me and my house.** — Joshua resolves, *First*, for himself ; *As for me, I will serve the Lord*. *Secondly*, for *his house*, that is, his family, his children, and servants, such as were immediately under his eye and care, his inspection and influence. — *M. Henry*. Every husband and father is largely responsible for the character of his household. Those who suffer their children and dependents to go without earnest religious influence must render a fearful account. — *Johnson*.

16. **The people answered.** — No doubt through their leaders, all by uplifted hands, or by a shout, consenting to their words. — *Gray*. **God forbid.** — By an emphatic expression, denoting the greatest dread and detestation imaginable, they show that they startle at the idea of apostatizing from God, as if it would imply their being utterly lost to justice, gratitude, honor, and every generous feeling. — *Bush*.

17, 18. **For the Lord our God, he it is.** — The people ground their promises of fidelity for the future on the dealings of God with them in the past: (1) their deliverance from Egypt; (2) the great signs wrought in that land; (3) their preservation in the wilderness; (4) the expulsion of the Amorites. — *Maclear*. **Even the Amorites.** — Among the deeds of Jehovah they recall especially the expulsion of the original inhabit-

dwelt in the land: *therefore* will we also serve the Lord; for he *is* our God.

19. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he *is* a holy God, he *is* a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

20. If ye forsake the Lord and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

21. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord.

22. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye *are* witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, *We are* witnesses.

23. Now therefore put away, *said he*, the strange gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.

ants of the land, and then add, in allusion to Joshua's last word, *therefore will we also serve the Lord, for he is our God. — Fay.*

19. Ye cannot serve God, in your own strength; it is more difficult than you imagine. Joshua wanted the resolve of calm judgment, not of excitement. He is an holy God, so must be served with holiness. — *Gray.* He is a jealous God. — Numerous passages in the prophets bring out the idea of God as one who requires of his people, whom he has married, the unbroken fidelity of marriage, and punishes most inflexibly any attachment to another god, any departure from him, whilst he continues his blessings upon love and fidelity even to distant generations. (Comp. Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 16:8, 22, 60; 23:3, 8, 19; Hos. 2:16.) — *Maclear.* He will not forgive, rather will not pass by, as if taking no notice. Joshua is supposing their wilful rebellion and forsaking of God. — *Gray.*

20. Then he will turn. — He will alter his attitude toward you. Strictly speaking, God is unchangeable. He is always toward the wicked a consuming fire. When a man changes from righteous to wicked he runs into this consuming fire. — *Steele.* After that he hath done you good. — That is, without any regard to the fact that he had done them good. — *Fay.*

21. Nay, but we will. — The people repeat their protestations of fidelity to Jehovah, and vow to serve him with sincerity. — *Maclear.* This shows that they understood the words of Joshua to imply no moral inability on their side. — *Bush.*

22. Ye are witnesses against yourselves. — Joshua calls them now to witness against themselves that they have chosen Jehovah as their God, to serve him, i. e., they will, if they ever fall away, be obliged to admit that they once chose Jehovah, and that he now has a right to punish them for their unfaithfulness. To this, too, they assent, replying, as with one mouth: witnesses (are we). — *Fay.*

23. Put away the strange gods. — (See note on verse 14.) The words import that there really were amongst the people, even in Joshua's days, those who were idolaters in secret, as there were in the days of Jacob before him, and of Samuel after him. — *Cook.* Incline your heart. — By the free act of your will in the use of the power by God's grace conferred upon all. — *Steele.*

24. And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

25. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

27. And Joshua said unto

all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

28. So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

29. And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old.

24. **The people said.**—For the third time (comp. vs. 16 and 21) the representatives of the nation avow that they will serve Jehovah and hearken only to his voice. — *Maclear*.

25. **Joshua made a covenant with the people that day.**—That is, he renewed the covenant concluded on Sinai by God with Israel (Ex. 19: 20), in like manner as Moses had done (Deut. 28: 69) in the field of Moab. When it is said further concerning Joshua that he set them a statute and an ordinance (or judgment) in Shechem, these words are in allusion to Ex. 15: 25, where, in connection with the change of the bitter water into sweet, God himself established for Israel a statute and right. Here, it was precisely through the renewal of the covenant that statute and right for the people were established and determined,—"what in matters of religion should be with Israel law and right" (Knobel). — *Fay*.

26. **Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God.**—Registered the engagements of that solemn covenant in the book of sacred history. **Took a great stone.**—According to the usage of ancient times, to erect stone pillars as monuments of public transactions. **Set it up . . . under an oak.**—Hebrew, *the oak*, or terebinth; in all likelihood the same as that where Abraham had worshipped (Gen. 12: 6), and at the root of which Jacob buried the idols and charms found in his family (Gen. 35: 4). **That was by the sanctuary of the Lord**—either the spot where the ark had stood, or else the place around, so called from Joshua's religious meeting, as Jacob named Bethel the house of God. — *J. F. & B.*

27. **For it hath heard all the words.**—By a striking figure the stone is spoken of as hearing. In the same sense, as a witness, it would testify against their transgressions whenever their eyes should rest upon it. — *Steele*.

29. **Joshua . . . died.**—Probably soon after the events just related above. It is noticeable that no mention is made of Israel's weeping for Joshua, as they did for Moses. Comp. Deut. 34: 8. In chapter 1: 1, Moses is called *the servant of the Lord*; here that title is given to Joshua. He who was then only *Moses' minister* attained at length the office of his master, and became, like him, *the servant of the Lord*. A hundred and ten years old.—Just the age of Joseph when he died (Gen. 1: 26). — *Steele*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction.—The land having been divided, and the cities of refuge appointed, Joshua summoned the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, commended them for their bravery and fidelity, and bade them return to their own settlements beyond the Jordan. Accordingly they departed. But while yet on the western side of the river they set up a great altar. Hastily inferring their intention to set up a separate place of sacrifice, in violation of God's command, the other tribes prepared for war. But first they sent Phinehas, the son of the high-priest Eleazar, with ten princes of the respective tribes, to remonstrate with them. They replied that they had not acted in the spirit of rebellion against Jehovah, but had erected a memorial altar to show that they had the same part and lot in national interests as the rest of their brethren. The explanation was satisfactory, and the embassy returned with the joyful news that there was no ground for a quarrel or an appeal to arms. And the children of Reuben and Gad called the altar "Ed," that is "a witness;" "for," said they, "it shall be a witness between us that Jehovah is God" (chap. 22).

"In the uncertainty of the chronology of this period we are unable to determine how long Joshua lived in the peaceful retirement of Timnath-serah. Twice, and twice only—if the two chapters (23, 24) do not describe different parts of the same transaction—does he emerge from his privacy, in extreme old age, to fortify the tribes, whom he had so often led in battle, with his parting words of warning and encouragement. Obedient to his summons, the heads and representatives of the tribes gathered round the venerable chief, beneath the old consecrated oak of Abraham and Jacob at Shechem. No place in the whole Land of Promise could have awakened so many sacred memories. Here was the first halting-place of the father of their nation where he rested after his departure from Haron, at which he received the first recorded promise of the land, and built the first altar to the one true God (Gen. 12:6, 7). Here also Jacob made his first settlement on his return from his sojourn with Laban, and restored his grandfather's altar on the plot of ground he had purchased (Gen. 33:18-20). Here also, beneath the ancient tree, the same patriarch buried the monuments of secret idolatry cleaving to his household (Gen. 35:4). And here, on their first entrance into the land, they themselves, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, had entered into covenant with God (Josh. 8:30-35). What place could be so suitable for the solemn appeals to faithfulness and obedience, the mingled reproofs and encouragements here addressed by Joshua to the people. All around would remind them of what God had done for them and for their fathers; how he had "given them a land for which they did not labor, and cities which they built not, and vineyards and oliveyards which they

planted not, and enforce the warnings against rebellion and idolatry."

Lesson Topics.—I. Joshua's Exhortation. II. Israel's Response. III. The Covenant Renewed.

I. JOSHUA'S EXHORTATION (vs. 14, 15). This is grounded on the goodness of God, of which he has just reminded the people (vs. 1-13). He exhorts them—

1. *To immediate decision* (v. 15). He proceeds upon the assumption that they must have a God, and he urges them to settle the question as to the God whom they will serve. If, in view of all that they have learned in their marvellous history, "it seem evil" to them to serve Jehovah, he points to the alternative, and urges them to "choose," and that without delay. The one thing which Joshua seems to fear most in his people is indecision, irresolution, trifling. If they can be made to choose decisively, he thinks they will choose rightly. In this he displays his wisdom. There are thousands around us to-day who are drifting in aimless indecision, and yet who mean to be right, even while they are all wrong. If by some power of truth or the Spirit of God they could be aroused to make a choice the chances are that they would decide for God. Other thousands are trifling between the claims of Christianity and the service of sin. They entertain a feeling of reverence for God, evince an indefinite desire for holiness, find a certain pleasure in religious services, and it would afford them the highest satisfaction, when the storms and conflicts of mortality are past, to be landed safe on "the evergreen shore," and to be introduced to the perfect beatitudes and triumphs of immortality. But they hold the demands of religion to be inconsistent with the gratification of their passion for gain, or pleasure, or worldly honor; and they will not yield to the crucifixion of every corrupt desire, or make that complete surrender of themselves to God, which, nevertheless, they must acknowledge to be their supreme duty and highest interest. In this dilemma there is nothing for them but to postpone a decision, and drift along. To all such come the impressive words of Joshua, "Choose ye this day." If it seem best to you to make a god of pleasure, or wealth, or worldly honor, make your choice, and serve your god. If you find such a decision impossible, and acknowledge the Lord as your God, then make your choice, and serve your God.

2. *To sincere service* (v. 14). "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Every man is bound to serve his god, no matter what his god may be. There is no other consistent course open to him. Joshua exhorts the people to choose whom they will serve. The service which Jehovah demanded from them, and claims from us, embraces trust, worship, and obedience, and all "in sincerity and in truth"—from the principle of love in the heart. In measure this service must be absolute and exclusive. Our trust must be implicit, and in God alone; our worship contemplate only the God in whom we trust; and our obedience be constant and willing. This is not

an unreasonable demand of the Most High. What he is in his own ineffable being, and what he is to us and has done for us, makes such "our reasonable service." Besides all this he offers to each of us his divine help to enable us to meet the requirement.

II. ISRAEL'S RESPONSE (vs. 16-24). The people were deeply impressed and moved. They felt the solemnity and force of their aged and venerable leader's appeal and exhortation. Their response was prompt and definite, as it should have been. The goodness of God, which they had so richly experienced, passed before their minds as Joshua reviewed the divine dealings with them. Their hearts were stirred to gratitude, and they were not disposed to turn away from Jehovah to any of their former abominations. They boldly and earnestly declared their purpose to serve the Lord, whom they claimed as their God. But the faithful Joshua means that the work shall be thorough. He meets them with words that suggest the impossibility of rendering this service without giving themselves exclusively to it. He would have them count the cost and understand well what they were doing. Then he warns them of the fearful consequences of forsaking God. But the people stood the test and still responded "Nay; but we will serve the Lord." The aged leader answered, "Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him." They could never after this plead ignorance of duty. Still the people were steadfast in their resolution, "and they said, We are witnesses."

III. THE COVENANT RENEWED (vs. 25-27).- Joshua crowned this solemn and interesting occasion by ratifying and renewing the covenant of the Israelites with their God. This covenant was originally made at Mount Sinai (Exod. 24: 3-8). It had been renewed by Moses shortly before his death (Deut. 29: 1). The design alike of Moses and his successor was to keep the solemn words of this covenant before the minds of the people, and to impress them on their hearts, so that they should be faithful in the performance of their part, and thus secure the mercies which God had covenanted to bestow. To this end Joshua wrote in a book all that had just transpired, and set up a great stone for a witness. Here is a fine impersonation of material nature. Joshua is determined that the impressions of this hour shall be lasting. There is something very splendid in his thus choosing a witness and an auditor from the domain of nature herself. How important are religious resolutions and vows! They are worthy of perpetual remembrance. "Choose you THIS DAY, whom you will serve." There is urgency in this matter. Procrastination is dangerous. We know not what a day may bring forth. Sin is very beguiling. You know not that another opportunity will be given you, and even if there should be, that you will be more disposed to accept it than you are now. Your advantages will never be greater than they are to-day. It is criminal to hesitate to do that which is so mani-

festly your reasonable service. If you will not decide while it is a day of grace, you must forever perish. "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation."

AUG. 19, 1883.]

LESSON VIII.

[JUDGES 2: 6-16.]

ISRAEL FORSAKING GOD.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers." — Verse 12.

TIME. — Death of Joshua (vs. 6-9), B. C. 1426; Period of the Judges (vs. 10-16), B. C. 1405-1095. **PLACE.** — The Land of Canaan.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

6. And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel.

7. And the people served the

6. When Joshua had let the people go. — This passage, vs. 6-9, has already occurred in nearly the same words in Josh. 24: 29-31 (Lesson VII). It seems to be repeated here as a suitable preliminary to the ensuing account of their degeneracy and apostasy. The angel (v. 1) had foretold that the Canaanites and their idols would be a snare to Israel. The writer is now about to show that this prediction was actually fulfilled, and in order to that he turns back and takes a brief retrospect of some previous incidents in their history which, by contrast, would set the enormity of their transgressions in a still more striking point of view. — *Bush.*

7. Served the Lord all the days of Joshua, etc. — This verse describes the whole period in which the people was submissive to the Word of God, although removed from under the direct guidance of Joshua. The people was faithful when left to itself by Joshua, faithful after his death, faithful still in the days of the elders who outlived Joshua. That whole generation, which had seen the mighty deeds that attended the conquest of Canaan, stood firm. — *Cassel.* **All the days of the elders.** — No exact term of years is assigned to "the days of the elders," which must, therefore remain uncertain. The length of Joshua's government is also uncertain. If, however, we assume Joshua to have been about the same age as his companion, Caleb, as is probable, he would have been just eighty at the entrance into Canaan, and therefore thirty years would bring us to the close of his life. These *elders* would be all that would be old enough to take part in the wars of Canaan, according to Judg. 3: 1, 2; and, therefore, reckoning from the age of twenty to seventy, we cannot be far wrong in assigning a period of about

8. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, *being* a hundred and ten years old.

9. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10. And also all that genera-

tion were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

11. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim.

fifty years from the entrance into Canaan to the death of the elders, or twenty years after the death of Joshua, supposing his government to have lasted thirty years. — *Cook*.

8. See Lesson VII, verse 29, notes.

9. **Timnath-heres.** — Called Timnath-serah in Josh. 24:30. The LXX. has Timnath-serah here. But the reading Timnath-heres (Timnath of the sun) is an early one. From it the Rabbinical tradition has arisen that he at whose word the sun stood still had a representation of the sun upon his sepulchre, and hence the name. But it is probable that the letters were transposed by an early copyist. Timnath-serah has been identified with the modern *Tibneh*, among the mountains of Ephraim, where there are some remarkable rock-hewn tombs. But Jewish tradition fixes the site at *Kefr Haris*, and Jewish tradition, which has preserved Abraham's sepulchre and Jacob's well, has been thought to be a safe guide here. Of the hill Gaash nothing is known, save its mention in 2 Sam. 23:30, and 1 Chron. 11:32. — *Lias*.

10. **All that generation.** — That is, the main body of those who were grown-up men at the time of the conquest of Canaan. — *Cook*. Which knew not the Lord — Had no practical or experimental knowledge of him; no deep or lively impression of his goodness; no affectionate, grateful, or devout sense of the wondrous manifestations of his power in their behalf. — *Bush*. How Israel came into the land, they must indeed have known; but to "know Jehovah" is something higher. They did not acknowledge that it was through God that they had come hither. Their fathers had seen and felt that victory and freedom came to them from the Lord. But they, as they did eat, built goodly houses, and dwelt in them (Deut. 8:12), forgot God, and said (Deut. 8:17): "Our power and the might of our hands hath gotten us this wealth." — *Cassel*.

11. **Did evil in the sight of the Lord.** — This is the regular phrase for falling into idolatry through this book of the Judges, and through all the historical books. — *Cook*. **Served Baalim.** — This word, the plural of "Baal," signifies lords. Their false gods the Canaanites considered as supernatural rulers or governors, each having his peculiar district and office. But when they wished to express a particular "Baal," or lord, they usually added some distinctive epithet, as *Baal-zephon*, *Baal-peor*, *Baal-zebul*, etc. The plural is here used to intimate that these imaginary deities were various, and that the worship of the Israelites, like that of the Canaanites, was not confined to any one of them. Lords many and gods many had dominion over them. — *Bush*.

12. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

13. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

14. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round

This was not the first time that Israel was seduced to this worship—see Num. 25:3-5—nor was it the last, for this form of pagan *cultus* continued in Israel up to the time of Samuel, at whose rebuke it was renounced (1 Sam. 7:4). It broke out again like a deadly contagion, and became the religion of the court and people under Ahab. It had the advantage of being a gorgeous ceremonial, dazzling the senses of the ignorant masses. It captivated many of the Hebrews during the reign of the kings.—*Steele*. From this verse onwards to the end of the chapter, the writer's drift seems to be to give in brief terms a summary or compend of the whole book. It is a general and condensed statement of the leading features of the history of Israel during the period of the Judges, which in the ensuing chapters is expanded into the various details of oppression and deliverance which are so briefly touched upon in these verses.—*Bush*.

12. **And they forsook the Lord God.**—Rather, *for* they forsook, etc., a mere enlargement in its more minute particulars of the general fact stated in the preceding verse.—*Bush*. **Bowed themselves.**—In worship as to Deity.—*Gray*. **Provoked the Lord to anger.**—A frequent expression, especially in Deut., in the Books of the Kings, and in Jeremiah, in connection with idolatry (Deut. 4:25; 9:18; 31:29; 1 Kings 14:9; 15:30, etc.; 16:33, etc.; Jer. 7:18, 19, etc.).—*Cook*.

13. **Baal.**—The singular form of the plural *Baalim*, see note ver. 11. **Ashtaroth.**—Ashtaroth, like Baalim above, is of the plural number, and is probably here used as a general name for all the female deities of these nations, as Baal or Baalim is of the male. The singular Ashtereth (Astarte) is the name of the Syrian Venus, who was worshipped with the most revolting and abominable rites. It is supposed that the moon was worshipped under this name, as was the sun under that of Baal.—*Bush*.

14. **And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel.**—The very same words are used in Ps. 106:40.—*Cook*. Anger and love are feelings of the divine as well as of the human mind, but not irregular and misdirected as they so often appear in men. They are not evil in themselves, and can only become so by becoming uncontrolled or directed towards wrong objects. Infinite wisdom never errs in either of these ways, and God's essential antagonism against sin and sinners is one of the perfections of his holy nature. And such righteous indignation the Scriptures properly call *anger*. Our God is a consuming fire to all the workers of iniquity, and his holy wrath burns with greater or less intensity according to the sinfulness of the sinner. **Spoilers.**—Predatory hordes, ruthless robbers, and hostile armies, who plundered their possessions and made

about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

15. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the

Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

16. Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

merchandise of their persons. **And he sold them.** — This term *sell* is used in a broad sense for renouncing ownership, and delivering over into hands of an enemy. The punishment involved in being sold was a payment to the divine justice. They failed to render due service to their only true Lord, and he, their rightful owner, sold them into a miserable slavery. Thus he vindicated the righteousness of his government, and for lack of service enforced a penalty. — *Steele*. So that they could not any longer stand, etc. — Compare Josh. 7:12. This was the fulfilment of the threat, Levit. 26:17, and the exact contrary of what was promised to them on condition of their obedience, Levit. 26:7, 8. Comp. Josh. 23:9, 10, 13. — *Cook*.

15. Whithersoever they went out. — Whatsoever they undertook. Heb.: "in everything to which they went forth." Not only in their military expeditions against their enemies, but in whatever undertaking they engaged at home they were still baffled and disappointed, and everything went against them. **As the Lord had said, etc.** — Particular reference is had to Lev. 26:15-17; Deut. 28:25; where these very judgments are expressly denounced against them in case they should thus apostatize. — *Bush*. God is as true to his *threats* as to his promises. — *Starke*.

16. The Lord raised up Judges. — That is, by the secret prompting and inspiration of his spirit, working upon the hearts of particular individuals, in view of the sufferings and calamities of the people, and inciting them like Moses in Egypt, to aim at effecting their deliverance. This inward impulse was usually, perhaps always, accompanied by an express call and command to undertake the work, and by some outward designation which testified to the people the divine election; such for the most part as the display of some signal act of heroism, the performance of some marvellous or miraculous exploit, as in the cases of Shamgar, Gideon, Samson, etc. — *Bush*. The term *Judges*, which occurs here for the first time, does not signify a mere judicial officer, whose functions are limited to the exposition and application of the law. It is used in a broad sense for a succession of executive officers who, by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, combined with great natural qualities, assumed the supreme control, unified the energies of a loose confederation of states, and aroused them to throw off the yoke of foreign oppression. — *Steele*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — The conquests of Joshua, great as they had been, had not achieved the complete reduction of the land, and large tracts still remained in the hands of the Canaanites. The duty of subduing these and driving them out had been

solemnly enforced by Joshua in his farewell address (Josh. 23:4-13). The generation to whom this address was given remained faithful to their engagements, and obeyed his injunctions. In the supplementary paragraph appended to the book of Joshua, it is stated that "Israel served the Lord," not only during "all the days of Joshua," but also, "all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua." These men, who had themselves "known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel," in bringing them into Canaan and in subduing hostile nations, never forsook his worship for the worship of the idols of the land, of whose boasted power they had witnessed so signal a discomfiture. The length of time which elapsed between the death of Joshua and the circumstance related in the first verse of the book of Judges, has not been precisely ascertained. It would appear that the Canaanites had assumed a threatening attitude. The condition of Israel was critical. They had no leader, for Joshua had named no successor; and who would dare to face the enemy without him? In this, their earliest trouble, they betook themselves to the Lord their God. They were not left without guidance and help. Some notable victories were won by them. Judah and Simeon attacked Bezek, and captured its ferocious king, Adoni-Bezek. Ephraim soon followed their example, and captured the town of Bethel. But they were not equally successful in expelling the Canaanites from other strongholds, and instead of driving them out, merely put them under tribute. In the same manner Zebulun and Naphtali spared the inhabitants of several towns within their borders. This was contrary to the word of Jehovah, and the disobedience of the people in this matter was the fruitful source of all the sin and consequent suffering experienced by them during the more than three hundred years covered by the period of the judges (chap. 1). That it should be so was announced to them by "an angel of the Lord" at Bochim (2:1-5).

Lesson Topics.—I. The Faithful Leader. II. The Unfaithful People.

I. THE FAITHFUL LEADER (vs. 6-10).—The writer here reverts to the history of Joshua, as if to bring out the reasons which called forth so strong and severe a rebuke from the angel of the Lord. The achievements, the example, and the exhortations of that great man had left them without excuse. This brief mention throws a strong light on two very important particulars concerning their late leader.

1. *His character.* He is here described as "the servant of the Lord." This is the highest and most honorable character that can be ascribed to man. How constant and faithful was the service of Joshua we have only to trace his history to perceive. His character is not only one of the very finest in Scripture, but one of the most remarkable the world ever saw. In it "have been traced under an oriental garb, such features as chiefly kindled the imagination of the western chroniclers and

poets in the middle ages ; the character of a devout warrior, blameless and fearless, who has been taught by serving as a youth how to command as a man ; who earns by manly vigor a quiet, honored old age ; who combines strength with gentleness, ever looking up for and obeying the divine impulse with the simplicity of a child, while he wields great power and directs it calmly, and without swerving, to the accomplishment of a high, unselfish purpose. All that part of the book of Joshua which relates his personal history seems to be written with the unconscious, vivid power of an eye-witness. We are not merely taught to look with a distant reverence upon the first man who bears the name which is above every name. We stand by the side of one who is admitted to hear the words of God, and see the vision of the Almighty. The image of the armed warrior is before us as when, in the sight of two armies, he lifted up his spear over unguarded Ai. We see the majestic presence which inspired all Israel with awe ; the mild father who remonstrated with Achan ; the calm, dignified judge who pronounced his sentence ; the devoted worshipper prostrating himself before the Captain of the Lord's host. We see the lonely man in the height of his power separate from those about him, the last survivor, save one, of a famous generation ; the honored old man of many deeds and many sufferings, gathering his dying energy for an attempt to bind his people more closely to the service of God whom he had so long served and worshipped, and whom he was ever learning to know more and more." Of the circumstances of his death we are told nothing. It is simply recorded that he "died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres." We need nothing more. After such a life the end could not be other than peaceful and triumphant.

2. *His influence.* "And all the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua." Character is the basis of influence. The character and admonitions of Joshua were powerful while he lived, and were not forgotten by those who had come within the circle of his influence, even after he was dead. His disinterestedness, his energy, his singleness of purpose, his faith in God, had left a track of glory behind, as the sun, after he has sunk below the horizon, flings gorgeous hues and golden light over all the western sky. It is the privilege of each of us to wield an influence for God and induce others to serve him as did Joshua. But to do this we must ourselves be faithful servants of the Lord, as he was.

II. THE UNFAITHFUL PEOPLE (vs. 11-16). In these and the verses immediately following (17-23 ; 3 : 1-6) the writer gives a brief but comprehensive summary of the history of Israel from the death of Joshua till the establishment of the monarchy. Apostasy and judgment, repentance and deliverance, this is the story outlined here, and repeated over and over again in this book of Judges.

1. *Apostasy.* This had its root in the disobedience of Israel with reference to the destruction of the Canaanite idolaters. Contrary to the express command of God the Israelites were tempted to make leagues with the remnants of these, then to inter-marry with them, then to attend their idolatrous festivals, and in the end to worship false gods themselves, and practice some of the worst abominations. Thus "they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods" (v. 12). There is a practical lesson suggested by this apostasy. The Canaanites may well represent the inward sins which are to be found in all of us. Pride, lust, covetousness, self-conceit, envy, worldliness, impatience, fretfulness, revengefulness — these constitute a band of brothers, tale sons of Anak, diverse in feature, yet all showing the ancestry and lineage of Satan. These must be extirpated. It is no child's play to do this, but a veritable struggle for life. For we must by God's help turn them out of our hearts, or they will keep us out of the kingdom of heaven. Indolence, secret love of sin, and unbelief combined to cause the disobedience of Israel, and like causes will produce like effects in us.

2. *Judgment.* A terrible series of judgments were the consequences of Israel's unfaithfulness. The book of Judges has abundant illustrations of this fact. Time and again, as "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served Baalim," "the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them." "Mercy shown to our lusts is cruelty to ourselves." All sin brings its sure judgments. If we wilfully spare a single Canaanite, or enter into a compromise with the enemy, though we may perhaps not fail of heaven at last, we shall have sorrow on our journey thither; "they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you" (v. 3).

3. *Repentance.* "And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord," when they were bowed down under his judgments, brought upon them by their apostasy. Over and over again is this statement repeated. It was the design of God in these judgments to thus bring them back to himself. Thus God deals with men to-day.

4. *Deliverance.* As often as Israel thus "cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them" (v. 9). These were the judges. They did not enter upon their office by popular election, or by hereditary succession, or by military despotism, or through personal or family influence — they were sent forth by the divine King of Israel — impelled by an inward inspiration, which was in several instances confirmed by outward miraculous signs, to act in his great name. Nor did they appear in an uninterrupted succession. There were intervals in which there was no judge in Israel. They were raised up as the exigencies of the times required. As often as the sins of the people brought down God's chastisements, and chastisement produced repentance,

judges were raised up to repel the invader, and to restore peace and tranquillity. Hence they are frequently called in the sacred history "deliverers and saviors." Usually, however, they are denominated judges. They were not called to extend the territory of Israel beyond the limits of the conquests of Joshua, but only to repress and keep down the heathen within those limits. In general they were successful; yet some important exceptions are noted in the sacred narrative. Their appearance, one after another, for the deliverance of the people from the consequences of their own oft-repeated sin is a standing illustration of the long suffering of our God, and his willingness to hear and answer the cry of the penitent soul.

AUG. 26, 1883.]

LESSON IX.

[JUDGES 7:1-8.]

GIDEON'S ARMY.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."—Verse 20.

TIME.—B. C. 1249. **PLACE.**—The well of Harod, near Mount Gilboa.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

1. Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of	Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley.
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1. **Jerubbaal.**—(Cf. ch. 6:32.) This had now become Gideon's honorable surname—"the enemy of Baal."—*J. F. & B.* He is so called here for the first time after the name was given him (6:32), with the explanation added, **who is Gideon?** See 8:35; Gen. 23:2; 35:6, etc.; Esth. 2:7. Comp. Acts 13:9. But in his case the old name keeps its ground all through chapters 7 and 8, except 8:29, 35. In chapter 9 the name Gideon disappears, and we have Jerubbaal throughout.—*Cook.* Gideon was a Manassite, youngest son of Joash of the Abiezrites, an undistinguished family, who lived at Ophrah, a town probably on this side of Jordan (Judges 6:15), although its exact position is unknown. He was the fifth recorded Judge of Israel, and for many reasons the greatest of them all. When we first hear of him he was grown up and had sons (Judg. 6:11; 8:20), and from the apostrophe of the angel (6:12) we may conclude that he had already distinguished himself in war.—*Wm. Smith.* **The well of Harod**—Or, *fountain of trembling.*—*Terry.* Evidently so called from the people who were *afraid* (*hared*), as mentioned in verse 3.—*Cook.* Probably the large fountain *Ain Jalud*, at the northern base of Mount Gilboa. It is a large pool, forty or fifty feet in diameter, and from it flows, down the valley, eastward, a stream strong enough to turn a mill. By this same spring the Israelitish army encamped at a later day, before

2. And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee *are* too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

3. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.

their disastrous battle with the Philistines, in which Saul was slain (1 Sam. 29 : 1). — *Terry*. The host of the Midianites. — The Midianites were a nomadic nation, so called from Midian, son of Abraham and Keturah. They were remarkable not only for the vast number of their cattle (Num. 31 : 32-39; Judges 6 : 5), but also for their great wealth in gold and other metal ornaments, showing their connection with a gold country. At this time they were allies of the Amalekites, and of the Arabian tribes called, collectively "the children of the East" (6 : 3; 7 : 12; 8 : 10; Gen. 25 : 6; Job. 1 : 3). They seem to have extended their settlements to the east of Jordan, and to have belonged to the larger section of Arabs called Ishmaelites. See chap. 8 : 24. — *Cook*. By the hill of Moreh in the valley. — This hill of Moreh is not to be confounded with the oak or oaks of Moreh, (wrongly rendered *plain* in English versions), near Shechem (Gen. 12 : 6; Deut. 11 : 30), but was the Little Hermon, lying directly north of the Ain Jalud; and the valley was the broad plain situated between this mountain and Mount Gilboa on the south. This valley is really the eastern arm of the great plain of Jezreel, and runs quite down to the Jordan. — *Terry*.

2. The Lord said . . . the people . . . are too many. — Although the Israelitish army mustered only 32,000 — or one-sixth of the Midianitish host — the number was too great; for it was the Lord's purpose to teach Israel a memorable lesson of dependence on him. — *J. F. & B.* Lest Israel vaunt themselves. — (Compare marginal references). The least chance of a natural explanation, so excites the pride of man, that he forgets God. . . . The number of warriors with which Gideon conquers must be so small that the miraculous character of the victory shall be evident to everybody. This belief in divine intervention will make Israel free; for not the winning of a battle, but only obedience toward God can keep it so. — *Cassel*.

3. Whosoever is fearful . . . let him return. — This was according to a standing enactment of the law (Deut. 20 : 8), the design of which was to prevent the contagious effects of cowardice or "faint-heartedness" in the army. — *Bush*. But in the case before us the intention of the Lord was to deprive his people of all ground of self-glorification. Hence the result of the appeal was one which Gideon certainly did not expect, namely, that more than two-thirds of his soldiers, 22,000 men, turned back, and only 10,000 remained. — *Keil*. Mount Gilead. — No mountain of this name is known in this locality, and it has been plausibly conjectured that the right reading is *Gilboah*. Others think this may be the customary form of proclamation in Manasseh. There returned, etc. —

4. And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people *are* yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be *that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I

say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

5. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shall thou

The near proximity of the terrible Midianites in the valley would tend to strike terror into them. — *Cook*.

4. **The people are yet too many.** — It is hardly possible to conceive a severer trial of faith than that to which Gideon's was now subjected. While he doubtless thought his men too *few*, God saw that they were too *many*, and ordered a still further reduction! — *Bush*. This may help us to understand those providences which sometimes seem to weaken the church and its interests — its friends are too many, too mighty, too wise, for God to work deliverance by; God is taking a course to lessen them, that he may be exalted in his own strength. — *M. Henry*. **I will try them.** — Will put them to the proof; or, Heb.: "will separate, will purify," the word usually applied to the assaying or refining of metals. — *Is.* 48: 10; *Mal.* 3: 2, 3. — *Bush*.

5. **Everyone that lappeth . . . as a dog.** — The true explanation undoubtedly is, that these men, instead of kneeling down to take a long draught, or successive draughts, from the water, employed their hand as the dog employs his tongue, — that is, forming it into a hollow spoon, and dipping water with it from the stream. This mode of drinking is often practised in the East, and practice alone can give that peculiar tact which generally excites the wonder of travellers. The interchange of the hand between the water and the mouth is managed with amazing dexterity, and with nearly or quite as much rapidity as the tongue of the dog in the same act. The water is not *sucked* out of the hand, but by a peculiar jerk is thrown into the mouth before the hand is brought close to it, so that the hand is approaching with a fresh supply almost before the preceding has been swallowed; which constitutes another resemblance to the action of the dog's tongue. In travelling, when one comes to water and wishes to drink, he cannot well stop the whole party to wait for him, and therefore, if on foot, any delay would oblige him to unusual exertion in order to overtake his party. Therefore he drinks in the manner above described, and satisfies his thirst in much shorter time than would one who should kneel or lie down for the purpose, and indulge himself in a more leisurely draught. This explanation will serve to show how the distinction operated, and why those who "lapped," putting their hand to their mouth, were considered to evince an alacrity and readiness for action which peculiarly fitted them for the service in which Gideon was engaged. — *Bush*. It can scarcely be doubted that those who threw themselves on the ground and drank freely were the more self-indulgent; while those who, remembering the near presence of the enemy, slaked their thirst with moderation, and without being off their guard for an

set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink.

6. And the number of them that lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

7. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save

you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the *other* people go, every man unto his place.

8. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all *the rest of* Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.

instant, were the true soldiers of the army of God. Compare David's abstinence when thirsty in 2 Sam. 23: 16. — *Cook*.

7. The Lord said . . . By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you. — It is scarcely possible to conceive a severer trial than the command to attack the overwhelming forces of the enemy with such a handful of followers. But Gideon's faith in the divine assurance of victory was steadfast; and it is for this he is so highly commended (Heb. 11: 32). — *J. F. & B.*

8. So the people took victuals. — This verse is rather obscure. A better sense is got by following the punctuation of the Septuagint and Chaldee versions: "*And they (the three hundred) took the victuals and trumpets of the people (all the people of verse 7) into their hands,*" i. e., as Jerome expresses by adding *pro numero*, as many of them as they required, so that each of the three hundred should have a trumpet and a pitcher. This explains how the three hundred came to have each a trumpet and a pitcher and a lamp. Gideon took them from the whole army of nine thousand seven hundred men before he dismissed them. — *Cook*. Every man unto his tent. — To be dismissed, or to go to the tents, is the standing formula by which the cessation of the mobile condition of the army is indicated. The people are free from military duty, but they do not appear to have entirely disbanded. — *Cassel*. The host of Midian was beneath him in the valley. — In the valley of Jezreel. This circumstance should be particularly noted in connection with the dream mentioned below (vs. 13-15). — *Bush*. This incident (the dream and its interpretation) had a twofold comfort for Gideon; it was an evident arrangement on the part of God to teach him from the mouth of an enemy; and it was also a proof that the Midianites and their allies were already affected by fear of the 32,000 with which he had hung on the mountain near them. Gideon was greatly encouraged. . . . Gideon's attack on the enemy was made at midnight. The three hundred men were divided into three companies, and they seem to have stretched in a line nearly or quite around the enemy's camp, the men placed at a considerable distance one from another (v. 18), as the object was not to fight, but to terrify. The stratagem of Gideon, or rather of God, was simple. The torches were concealed in the large pitchers, or bread jars, until the men had taken their stations, so that their movement might not

be detected. It was the duty of the leader of a band to blow the trumpet and give the war-cry. By him, in a night attack, stood a torch-bearer to light the way and guide the soldiers, so that they might always know where to find the leader; the torch at night was like the banner of day. Three hundred trumpets and torches represented three hundred companies of troops. The breaking of the jars, the outflashing of the lights, the deafening blare of trumpets on every side, aroused the enemy from sleep. The Israelites seemed, by the many lights and trumpets, to be present in overwhelming numbers. Each heathen in the darkness mistook his neighbor for a foe. They slew one another. The panic was universal. The invaders, incumbered with women and children and plunder of flocks and herds, as nomadic invaders are always cumbered, fled in confusion and scattered over the country, throughout which Gideon sent runners to arouse the people. The fords of the Jordan were seized by the Israelites, and the destruction of the invaders was complete. — *J. Johnson.*

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — A period of many years is passed over in our lessons. A summary of their history, as we have seen, is given in chapter 2:10-23; 3:1-6. Before Gideon there had been four judges. The crisis which called forth the first of these deliverers was the invasion of the country by the Mesopotamians, who, pushing their conquests continually southwards, grievously oppressed the Israelites for eight years. Then OTHNIEL, son-in-law of Caleb, went out against them and defeated them, and so the land had rest for forty years (3:7-11). On the death of Othniel, the people again fell into idolatry, and the Moabites under Eglon, aided by the Ammonites and Amalekites, crossed the Jordan and laid the tribe of Benjamin under tribute to them for eighteen years. EHUD killed their king, aroused the Israelites to rise against the invaders, and thus delivered the land. Rest was now restored to the tribe of Benjamin for eighty years, but the southwest borders were ravaged by the Philistines. They were, however, resisted by SHAMGAR, who obtained a temporary respite for his people (3:12-31). Israel sinned again, and another oppressor was permitted to afflict them. Jabin and Sisera, with a great army and nine hundred chariots of iron, overran the country. This time deliverance was wrought through the instrumentality of a woman. DEBORAH, with Barak at the head of the army, utterly defeated Jabin and Sisera, and secured to the land rest for forty years.

Once more Israel fell into idolatry, and more deeply than ever before. The people practised the worst abominations that disgraced the worship of Baal. Thus they called down upon themselves a judgment more severe than any they had yet endured. The Midianites, Amalekites, and "the children of the East," or the Arabian tribes beyond the Jordan, poured into the country and destroyed the crops. Thus for seven years the Israelites were reduced to the greatest straits. At length, as so often before, the deliverer came. At Ophrah, in the hills of western Manasseh,

lived an Ablezrite, named Joash, who had lost all his sons in battle save one, named GIDEON. On one occasion, as Gideon was threshing wheat behind the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites, an angel appeared and informed him that he was the destined savior of his people. Gideon requested a sign to assure him of the truth of this announcement, and begged him to remain seated under the oak till he should, according to the simple custom of the time, prepare a present to set before him. The angel directed him to lay the flesh and cakes upon the rock, and pour the broth over them. He then touched them with a rod, and straightway there rose up fire from the rock and consumed the offering, and the angel left him. Then the Lord appeared to Gideon in a dream and commanded him to throw down an altar of Baal which his father had erected, and to build an altar to Jehovah and sacrifice thereon. During the night Gideon did so. The people were angry, but Gideon was preserved (chap. 6).

Lesson Topics.—I. The Army Assembled. II. The Army Reduced.

I. THE ARMY ASSEMBLED (v. 1). "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Abi-ezer was gathered after him" (6:34). The time had now arrived for him to enter upon a wider sphere of action. With the sound of the trumpet he summoned the men of Manasseh, and even the men of distant tribes to rally round his standard. The Midianites were collecting their hosts, as if for some decisive and crowning step. No longer spread over the country in wandering parties, they "were gathered together and pitched in the valley of Jezreel." Gideon summoned the men of Israel to assemble also. The northern tribes responded to the number of thirty-two thousand. The southern and midland tribes were not notified; an omission which was deeply resented afterwards by the tribe of Ephraim. The host of Israel and the host of Midian were now face to face; the Midianites in the valley of Jezreel, the Israelites, not one-fourth of their number, on high ground to the south of them. A terrible battle seemed inevitable, and Gideon asks a sign from God. His prayer is heard; and the wet and the dry fleece give him a double attestation that God is with him, and that, therefore, he is in the way of duty. He no longer fears lest, deluded by a phantom, he should be leading his trusting countrymen into the jaws of death. There is a very precious revelation of the condescension of God in his treatment of his servant in this matter of the sign which has an imperishable value.

II. THE ARMY REDUCED (vs. 2-8).—We come now to the events of the day of Midian, one of the most memorable days in the history of the chosen people. Gideon's first movement on this eventful day was to advance his army of thirty-two thousand men to a position "beside the well," or spring, "of Harod," which was probably lower down the declivity and nearer to the enemy.

1. *The first reduction* (vs. 2, 3). Scarcely had this movement been effected when he received from the Lord a most startling intimation. His army, miserably equipped and poorly fed, was far outnumbered by that of the enemy. He might have feared, not unreasonably, their number to be too few. But "the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many." This intimation was not given, however, without a reason being assigned. The majority of those who had come together were not prepared to receive a victory over the Midianites. They would not know how to appreciate it; the tendency to glorify self and to rob God of His praise existed in full force in them, and they were unworthy of the honors of a victory which was to be achieved through faith. Besides, many of them were cowards at heart, and their presence was a source of weakness rather than strength; yet these very men were the likeliest, in the event of a victory, to return home glorifying their own prowess, and forgetting the God who had interposed for them. Therefore the Lord would not "give the Midianites into *their* hands."

In accordance with the divine command, proclamation is made, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid let him depart early from Mount Gilead"—a name, apparently, of the district in which they were encamped, and which must not be confounded with the Gilead on the other side of Jordan. This proclamation was in exact conformity with the law of Moses (Deut. 20: 2, 8). No less than twenty-two thousand availed themselves of Gideon's proclamation. They had probably been the foremost in boasting, for the courage which blusters most noisily at a distance evaporates most quickly when danger is at hand. What must Gideon have felt as he saw two-thirds of his army turn back. Like the stony-ground hearers in our Lord's parable, they had heard the word, and anon with joy received it, but having no root in themselves they endured but for a while and when danger really threatened them they turned aside. In all ages the testing periods of the church have yielded similar results; and it is for each of us to examine his own heart.

2. *The second reduction* (vs. 4-8). Ten thousand men remained; but Gideon's faith was to be yet more severely tried. The Lord said, "The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there." They were accordingly moved to the pool of Harod, that they might drink. The vast majority went down on their knees, and, putting their face to the water, sucked up in a long, satisfying draught; while a few—three hundred only—remained upon their feet and took up the water by handfuls, lapping it hastily out of the hand with their tongues. Such was the sign. The three hundred who lapped with the tongue, these, and these only, were to accompany Gideon against the innumerable host whose tents and camels covered all the plain; while the remainder of the ten thousand were to return "every man to his place" in the encampment. Longfellow, in the preface to a volume of poems, has suggested the true explanation of this

sign: "It is not those who bow down on their knees to drink of the streams that water life, but those who take sparingly, as from the palm of the hand, who are destined to overcome and overthrow." The battle was to be won against overwhelming numbers. The Lord needed men who would be firm as a bow of steel in his hand. And how did he find them? Not by asking for volunteers and listening to protestations, but by watching them in the quiet and common actions of life. It is the small matters that reveal us, the slight occasions. There is One watching us when we are most unconscious. Our conduct in the trivial affairs settles before God our fitness for the great ones.

SEPT. 2, 1883.]

LESSON X.

[JUDGES 16: 21-31.]

THE DEATH OF SAMSON.

GOLDEN TEXT. — "The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people." — Psalm 68: 35.

TIME. — B. C. 1120. **PLACE.** — Gaza.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

21. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

21. **The Philistines.** — A wealthy and powerful commercial people on the southwestern border of Israel, on the shores of the Mediterranean. Their territory was assigned to Judah and Dan; but, though conquered on the first invasion of Canaan (Josh. 13: 2; Judges 1: 18), they regained it and held it till the time of David, who conquered it. They continued to annoy Israel, however, till the time of the Maccabees. The name Philistine means *emigrant*, from the emigration of this people early (Gen. 21: 32, 34) into Canaan (Gen. 10: 14). Our word Palestine is derived from the word Philistine. — *Johnson*. **Took him** (Samson). Samson means "little sun," or "sunlike." He was the son of Manoah, a man of the town of Zorah, in the tribe of Dan, on the border of Judah (Josh. 15: 33; 19: 41). The miraculous circumstances of his birth are recorded in Judg. 13; and the three following chapters are devoted to the history of his life and exploits. Samson takes his place in Scripture, (1) as a judge (Judg. 15: 20; 16: 31); (2) as a Nazarite (Judg. 13: 5; 16: 17); and (3) as one endowed with supernatural power by the spirit of the Lord (Judg. 13: 25; 14: 6, 19; 15: 14). — *Wm. Smith*. **Put out his eyes.** — The Hebrew verb means *to bore*, and indicates that they thrust his eyes out by very violent means. This they did as soon as they had secured him, and thus rendered his case apparently helpless and hopeless. — *Terry*. For the cruel practice of putting out the eyes, compare Num. 16: 14; 2 Kings 25: 7; Jer. 39: 7, and frequent examples in profane history.

22. Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

23. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Sam-

son our enemy into our hand.

24. And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

Brought him down to Gaza. — Down, as nearer to the sea than the valley of Sorek. — *Cook.* They brought him to Gaza because it was the chief city of the nation, and far removed from the vicinity of the Israelites, who might seek to rescue him, and there was their great state prison. — *Terry.* **Fetters of brass.** — In the Hebrew *brasses*, as we say *irons*, but in the dual number implying their application to the two feet, 2 Sam. 3:34; Jer. 3:11. **He did grind.** — The special task of slaves and captives (Exod. 11:5; Isa. 47:2; Lam. 5:13). — *Cook.*

22. **Hair . . . began to grow again.** — We must not suppose that Samson's great strength lay in his hair, and yet beneath that hair was the secret of his power. Not the hair, but the Nazarite consecration which it represented, was his glory before God; and when his locks were shaven, Jehovah was basely dishonored, and at once departed from him (v. 20). Nor would he return to bless the dishonored Nazarite until the symbol of his Nazarite vow appeared again. — *Terry.* It is probable that he had now reflected on his folly, and, becoming a sincere penitent, renewed his Nazarite vow. — *J. F. & B.* His hair grew together with his repentance, and his strength with his hair. — *Bishop Hall.*

23. **The lords of the Philistines gathered . . . to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon.** — It was a common practice in heathen nations, on the return of their solemn religious festivals, to bring forth their war prisoners from their places of confinement or slavery, and, in heaping on them every species of indignity, offer their grateful tribute to the gods by whose aid they had triumphed over their enemies. A vast temple was there erected to Dagon, who was a sea-idol, usually represented as having the head and upper parts human, while the rest of the body resembled a fish. — *J. F. & B.* He was the great national deity of the Philistines, but was worshipped under modified forms and names by other nations. He was the representative or symbol of all those life-giving forces of nature which produce their effects through the medium of water. — *Terry.*

24. **When the people saw him** — In all his apparent misery and helplessness — **praised their god.** — They ascribed to Dagon the glory of making this great national enemy a blind and helpless captive. They gazed and wondered at the spectacle of one who had been so great a terror to all Philistia brought to the low condition of a blind and insulted prison slave. None but a god could, in their view, have wrought a victory like this, and they very naturally recognized, with festal rejoicings, the superiority of their national marine god over Jehovah, the national god of the Hebrews. — *Terry.*

25. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

26. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the

house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

27. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there: and *there were* upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

28. And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray

25. **When their hearts were merry** — viz., with wine (19: 6, 9, 22; Ruth 3: 7; 1 Sam. 25: 36, etc.). — *Cook.* **That he may make us sport.** — That is, passively, that he may be a subject of sport and merriment to us; that we may make ourselves merry at his expense. The idea, doubtless, is simply that he should be brought out to become a laughing-stock to them, a butt for their scoffs, mockeries, and insults. — *Bush.*

26, 27. **Suffer.** — Literally, *cause me to rest*, i. e., do not hinder me. — *Lias.* **There were upon the roof about three thousand men and women.** — This building seems to have been similar to the spacious and open amphitheatres well known among the Romans, and still found in many countries of the East. They are built wholly of wood. The standing place for the spectators is a wooden floor resting chiefly upon two midmost pillars, and rising on an inclined plane, so as to enable all to have a view of the area in the centre. In the middle there are two large beams, on which the whole weight of the structure lies, and these beams are supported by two pillars placed almost close to each other, so that when these are unsettled or displaced, the whole pile must tumble to the ground. — *J. F. & B.* The lords and principal persons seem to have sat within, *under* the roof, while the people to the number of 3,000 stood *on* the flat roof. — *Cook.*

28. **And Samson called unto the Lord.** — This shows that he had fully recovered himself. As soon as he can pray again he is the hero again. The prayer he now offers is full of fervor and intensity, rising heavenward like smoke from the altar of incense. It is the deep and vast complaint which, after the awful experiences of the last days, grief and hope have caused together in his soul. He uses all the names of God with which he is acquainted, and confesses him, in the darkness which surrounds him, more deeply and fervently than formerly when enjoying the light of the sun. — *Cassel.* **That I may be at once avenged, etc.** — Meaning, *with one final revenge.* These words do not, it is true, breathe the spirit of the gospel, but they express a natural sentiment proper to the age and knowledge and character of Samson. — *Cook.* Is it right to pray thus? For Samson it is. For he was called to recompense the Philistines; he fell only because instead of avenging the wrongs of his people on their oppressors, he squandered his strength with the Philistine woman. If now he desires the restoration of his lost strength,

thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

29. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with

all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life.

31. Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down and took him, and brought *him* up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the burying-place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

he can lawfully do so only for the purpose for which it was originally given. To rend cords in pieces for sport was not his business, but to make the enemy acquainted with the power of the gracious God of Israel. — *Cassel*. His penitent and prayerful spirit seems clearly to indicate that this meditated act was not that of a vindictive suicide, and that he regarded himself as putting forth his strength in his capacity of a public magistrate. He must be considered, in fact, as dying for his country's cause; and his death was not designed or sought, except as it might be the inevitable consequence of his great effort. His prayer must have been a silent ejaculation, and from its being revealed to the historian, approved and accepted of God. — *J. F. & B.*

29. **Took hold.** — The word is an unusual one which occurs here for the first time. See Ruth 3:8 (margin) and Job 6:18. Samson *bent or clasped* his hands or arms round the pillars. — *Lias*.

30. **Let me die.** — I am content to die, if the glory of God requires it; as at once a suitable punishment to me and means of judgment to the Philistines. Heb.: "let my soul die:" i.e., according to Hebrew usage, let my life become extinct. — *Bush*. **He bowed himself with all his might.** — Literally, *he bent with (or in) strength*. — *Lias*. **The house fell.** — When the pillars were removed, the weight of 3,000 people brought the roof down with a fearful crash, and those above fell upon those below, together with the stones and timbers, and a great slaughter was the result, — Samson himself perishing under the ruins. — *Cook*.

31. **His brethren.** — The Danites. **House of his father.** — His immediate relatives. **Took him.** — For the terrible calamity of the Philistines rendered them unable or indisposed to hinder the removal of Samson's body. — *Terry*. **Zorah.** — A town in the low country of Judah, assigned to Dan. (Josh 15:33; 19:41). This was the birthplace of Samson. **Eshtaol.** — A town also in the low country of Judah. Samson spent his boyhood in this neighborhood, and here first manifested his wonderful strength (Judg. 13:25). — *Whitney*. **In the burying place of Manoah his father.** — There is nothing in all this narrative so full of pathos as this record of Samson's burial. Amid those native hills, and near the spot where the spirit first began to move him to his famous exploits (13:25), and by the side of that father who had watched with pride the

growth and wondrous power of his son, but, probably, never lived to see his misery and shame—there they laid the great Danite hero in his dishonored grave, and with mingled pride, reverence, and sorrow remembered that he judged Israel twenty years. — *Terry*. The term simply implies a position of importance in Israel, and not of necessity what we now understand by judicial functions. — *Lias*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction.—The Midianites were routed by Gideon and his three hundred, who pursued them and captured their two kings. The immediate effect of this victory was very great. Israel had rest forty years. After the death of Gideon, the Israelites again fell away into idolatry. Abimelech, one of the sons of Gideon, whose mother had been a slave, murdered all his brethren, except Jotham, the youngest, and was crowned king by the people of Shechem. While he was besieging Thebez a woman threw a piece of millstone upon his head, fracturing his skull; but he, unwilling to die by the hand of a woman, ordered his armor-bearer to kill him with a sword. He cannot be reckoned as a judge, but rather as a cruel and unprincipled adventurer. TOLA was judge twenty-three years; and JAIR twenty-two. The people were oppressed by the Philistines and Amorites, and the Lord raised up JEPHTHAH, who brought them deliverance. He was judge six years. IBZAN judged after him seven years; ELON, ten years; ABDON, eight years. Meanwhile the Philistines had established themselves in the southwestern lowlands, and commenced a course of deadly hostility against the Israelites. The tribe of Dan, already hard-pushed by the Amorites, suffered the most. From this tribe the deliverer appeared, but, unlike the judges before him, he was specially set apart for his work even before his birth (chap. 7-12).

The circumstances attending the birth of Samson are related with great minuteness. On the high hill of Zorah overlooking the whole Philistine plain, dwelt at this time a Danite named Manoah, of whom nothing is known but what the sacred narrative supplies. His wife had no child, but an angel appeared to her with the announcement that she would bear a son. The prediction was accompanied with a command that he should be separate to God from his birth as a Nazarite; that, accordingly, he was to drink no wine nor strong drink, nor eat anything unclean, nor to allow a razor to come on his head; and the command was accompanied with the promise, "He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines." In due time the child was born, and was named SAMSON. As he grew he became distinguished for supernatural strength. His first recorded act, however, involved a violation of the law, and was far from displaying that enmity to the Philistines which his parents might have expected. At Timnath he saw one of the daughters of that nation, and he resolved to marry her, and in

due time, carried his resolution into effect. Of the events of the twenty years during which Samson judged Israel none have been preserved, except such as relate to his personal history; nor have we the means of ascertaining in what degree his authority was recognized, or how far beyond the bounds of his own tribe it extended. The narrative, in sketches of the most vivid and picturesque character, shows us the opening of his career, and its termination, while the intervening period is hidden from our view. Between the date of his retiring to the rock Etam, after the slaughter of the Philistines, and the disastrous day some twenty years later, when he was enticed by Delilah, two great exploits are related — the slaughter of a thousand men by the jawbone, which took place at the commencement of the period, and the carrying away of the gates of Gaza, which occurred probably toward its close. He had begun to deliver Israel. His name and fame kept the Philistines in check, and prevented them from completing their designs of conquest. If he was not permitted to lead the armies of the chosen nation to victory, he was at least a shield and defense to his country during the twenty years of his administration.

Lesson Topics. — I. Samson's Fall. II. Samson's End.

I. SAMSON'S FALL (vs. 21-25). The history of this fall is given with some detail (chap. 14; 15; 16:1-25). The points to be noticed are —

1. *Whence he fell.* Samson was designed for great things. If he had been true to himself and to his God he might have risen to any height. He sustained a special relation to the Most High. This is seen in the circumstances attending his birth and boyhood. His marvellous strength was the result of this special connection with Jehovah. This fact is made prominent in his history. Four times it is declared that "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him" in connection with his feats of strength (13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:4). This was the philosophy of all his strength. He was powerful because God was specially with him and in him. A frail man may become mighty through God. Through God Joshua's feeble voice held the sun and moon, and the touch of Elisha and the voice of Peter had power to wake the sleeping dead. Now it was from this exalted position that Samson fell. He departed from God, and then "the Lord departed from him." All our strength and usefulness and blessedness depend on our nearness to God. Let Him depart from us and we are ruined.

2. *Why he fell.* The cause must be sought in himself. He yielded to his own blind passions, and trampled on the law of his God. He sacrificed everything to the gratification of his animal nature. It was his lusts that ruined him. Morally a man falls of his own will. Satan himself cannot hurl him down from the heights of virtue against his own will. God gives us manhood and strength. Indulgence in sin robs us of manhood and leaves us powerless. But sin is always voluntary. Hence if we fall the responsibility will be upon ourselves. The

toils of the destroyer and the snares of evil are spread all around us, but, availing ourselves of the offered help of God, we may keep clear of them if we will.

3. *How he fell.* Not at once. His descent was very gradual, and almost imperceptible to himself. He tampered with appetite and gratified his animal desires ; and thus gradually sliding away from the virtuous and true, he lost his power before he was aware of it. It doubtless seemed like a sudden catastrophe when Samson, who had been the glory and defence of his people, the very hero of Dan, is led a nerveless and enslaved captive into the dungeons of the Philistines, yet the progress of sin was very gradual over his heart. Here is a lesson on the insidious character and subtle approach of sin to which we cannot give too serious attention. And furthermore, with every sin there comes a blunting of that moral capacity by which you detect its presence. Samson "wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

4. *Whither he fell.* Into the hands of his pitiless enemies. The Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass ; and he did grind in the prison house. "How cruel their treatment!" But it is only a faint picture of the moral misery and degradation into which sin sinks the fallen soul. Sin is more merciless than the Philistines, for it plunges the *soul* into midnight darkness, and binds the *spirit* in fetters of brass.

II. SAMSON'S END (vs. 26-31). It was as much in pity and for the recovery of his servant, as in wrath to punish him, that the Lord departed from Samson, took away his gift of strength, and left him to grind low and miserable in the cruel prison at Gaza. His eyes were put out, but that was better than having eyes to gaze on sin ; his feet were fettered, but that was safer than being free to wander from the path of duty ; he was exposed to the insults of the uncircumcised, but these were far less degrading than the caresses of Delilah. Samson evidently had not been prepared for any such result. He had never really conceived that it would come to this ; that he would fall helpless into the hands of the Philistines. He had presumed on God's mercy, until at length vengeance blazed forth, and all but consumed him. How long the untamed and savage fury of his wrath continued raging before it began to subside—how long he was in regaining a calm view of the covenant he had forgotten—cannot be precisely stated. That he did recall his forgotten vow we know. His hair grew with time, and his strength returned with repentance and practical obedience. He allowed his hair to grow. The return of his strength was connected with the second growth of his hair, or so obvious a circumstance would not be made a matter of record. The power did not spring from the long hair, but from obedience to God's will. Samson prayed in his prison. This was also a means of strength. All true power comes from God, and submissive prayer is the condition upon which it is imparted. Samson gave terrible evidence to his enemies of the restoration of his

strength. To celebrate the capture of their dreaded foe the Philistines made a festival to Dagon. The temple was filled. Hither the blinded giant was led to make sport for his brutal captors. At his own request he is suffered to feel the pillars by which the temple was supported, and standing there he prayed that for once his old strength might come back to him. Then taking hold of the pillars with both hands he bowed himself with all his might, and the temple walls fell in, and crushed the lords of the Philistines and the assembled crowd. Samson's body was extricated from the ruins, and was laid by his brethren and kinsmen in the burial-place of Manohah, his father. Thus Samson devoted himself to vindicate the power of Jehovah over Dagon, the idol of the Philistines. Being enticed, he had sinned; sinning, he had suffered; suffering, he had repented; repenting, he had prayed and waited upon the Lord; waiting upon the Lord, he had renewed his strength, and "the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

SEPT. 9, 1883.]

LESSON XI.

[RUTH 1:14-22.

RUTH AND NAOMI.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."—Verse 16.

TIME.—About B. C. 1320 (?). **PLACE.**—Moab, east of the Dead Sea; Bethlehem.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

14. And they lifted up their voice and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law: but Ruth clave unto her.

14. **They.**—Naomi (v. 2) and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth (v. 4).—**Lifted up their voice and wept again.**—(Comp. v. 9). Naomi's disinterested love for her daughters-in-law shines forth very conspicuously (vs. 11-13). Bitter as the prospect of separation must have been to her, she sets before Ruth and Orpah, on the one hand, the domestic happiness which they might enjoy in their own country, and, on the other hand, the extreme improbability of their finding a second home in the land of Israel. In language which seems to involve allusion to the Levirate law (Deut. 25:5), Naomi assures her two daughters-in-law how gladly she would have welcomed a renewal of the tie which had previously existed between them; but, at the same time, she urges them, with a view to their own happiness (for the sake of which she expresses her readiness to submit to any amount of personal sacrifice), to consent to its severance forever. "Nay, my daughters," she says, "for it is very bitter to me for your sakes," (or, "for it is much more bitter to me than for you,") "for the hand of Jehovah is gone out against me."—*Elliot*. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law.—The kiss at meeting and parting

15. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law.

16. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee;

for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God:

17. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and

is the customary friendly and respectful salutation in the East. — *Cook*. **Ruth clave.** — Expressing her resolution in action, as Orpah had expressed hers. Ruth's resolve, and her action in throwing her arms around the neck of Naomi, were not merely from love, but also from regard for Jehovah, concerning whom she had been instructed by Naomi and her own husband. — *Johnson*. Ruth realized in her affectionate heart a keen sense of her mother-in-law's forlorn condition. She could not consent to abandon her under these circumstances. — *Atto*. The difference between mere kindness of manner and self-sacrificing love is most vividly depicted in these words, *Ruth clave unto her.* — *Cook*.

15. **Unto her people.** — The Moabites. "The country of Moab," (v. 1) *Lit.*, *The fields of Moab*, was the district east of the Dead Sea, forty or fifty miles in length by twenty in width, peopled by the descendants of Moab, whose origin is narrated in Gen. 19:30-37. — *Terry*. *Gone back to her people*, and therefore of course gone back to her gods; for whatever she might have done while she lived with her mother-in-law, it would be next to impossible for her to show any respect to the God of Israel when she went to live among the worshippers of Chemosh. Those that forsake the communion of saints, and return to the people of Moab, will certainly break off their communion with God, and embrace the idols of Moab. — *M. Henry*.

16. **Entreat me not to leave thee.** — Nothing in all the range of literature can surpass the beauty and tenderness of Ruth's reply to Naomi, contained in this and the following verse. — *Terry*. The Targum adds several things to this conversation between Naomi and Ruth. I shall subjoin them. "And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, for *I desire to become a proselyte.*" And Naomi said, *We are commanded to keep the Sabbath and other holy days; and on it not to travel more than two thousand cubits.* And Ruth said, "Whither thou goest, I will go." And Naomi said, *We are commanded not to lodge with the Gentiles.* Ruth answered, "Where thou lodgest, I will lodge." And Naomi said, *We are commanded to observe the one hundred and thirteen precepts.* Ruth answered, *What thy people observe, that will I observe;* as if they had been my people of old. And Naomi said, *We are commanded not to worship with any strange worship.* Ruth answered, "Thy God shall be my God." Naomi said, *We have four kinds of capital punishments for criminals: stoning, burning, beheading, and hanging.* Ruth answered, "In whatsoever manner thou diest, I will die." Naomi said, *We have a house of burial.* Ruth answered, "And there will I be buried." — *Clarke*. Blessed are the human ties that lead us to God and heaven! — *Terry*.

17. **The Lord do so to me, and more also.** — An ancient form

more also, *if aught* but death part thee and me.

18. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

19. So they two went until

they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, *Is this Naomi?*

20. And she said unto them,

this of imprecation, by which Ruth confirms, with a solemn oath, her resolution to adhere to Naomi till death. — *Benson*.

18. When she saw that she was steadfastly minded. — The effect of Naomi's repeated entreaties to Ruth to leave her was only to bring out more clearly Ruth's steadfast determination to cast in her lot with the people of the Lord. Compare the very similar entreaties of Elijah, and the steadfast determination of Elisha not to leave him, 2 Kings 2:2-6. In Elisha's case, as in Ruth's, the reward of steadfast persistence was very great. — *Cook*. Older expositors have imagined that Naomi's efforts to persuade her daughters-in-law to return homeward were not altogether seriously meant. She only wished to test them. They take this view in order to free Naomi from the reproach of being too little anxious to introduce her daughters into Israel and the true faith. But this whole exposition is a dogmatic anachronism. Naomi could entertain no thoughts of missionary work as understood in modern times, and for that she is not to be reproached. — *Cassel*. She left speaking unto him. — See the power of resolution, how it put temptation to silence. Those that are unresolved, and go in religious ways without a steadfast mind, tempt the tempter, and stand like a door half open, which invites a thief; but resolution shuts and bolts the door, resists the devil, and forces him to flee. — *M. Henry*.

19. They came to Bethlehem. — A town of Judah, nearly six miles south of Jerusalem. It was an inconsiderable place, hence its name does not occur in the enumeration of cities by Joshua, (chap. 15), and the prophet Micah (5:2) styles it "the least among the thousands of Judah." Bethlehem, although originally of so little consequence, is honored as the birthplace of the most illustrious personage of all history, and as the residence of the three noted characters, Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. King David was born here. — *Whitney*. All the city was moved. — Bethlehem was a small town, (Micah 5:2), and in such small villages, and specially in an age when there were no newspapers, mails, etc., every event flew quickly abroad by the communications of friend to friend. Probably Naomi had been known widely and favorably in the place. The statement that the town was moved is introduced for its bearing on the future narrative. See chap. 2:11, 12. — *Johnson*. And they said. — *They* in the Hebrew is feminine. *The women of Bethlehem said*. — *Cook*. *Is this Naomi?* In these words there was an expression of amazement, not so much at the fact that Naomi was still alive, and had come back again, as at her returning in so mournful a condition, as a solitary widow, without either husband or sons. — *Keil*.

20. Call me not Naomi. — The meaning of Naomi is *pleasant, sweet*, to which she opposes what she calls a more appropriate name for her in

Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

21. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty; why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and

the Almighty hath afflicted me?

22. So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab; and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

her present circumstances. Call me *Mara*, i. e., *bitter* (Exod. 15 : 23). Similar allusions to the meaning of names are seen, Gen. 27 : 36 ; Jer. 20 : 3, etc. — *Cook*.

21. *I went out full.* — That is, in the rich possession of a husband and two sons. — *Home again empty.* — Bereft of my most precious treasures, so that the cause of my pleasantness is gone. — *Terry. Hath testified against me.* — The reference may probably be to the distrust of God's providential care involved in the migration from the land of Canaan and settlement in that of Moab. *The Almighty.* — i. e., Shaddai (cf. Exod. 6 : 3). This name of God occurs rarely except in the Pentateuch and in the book of Job. — *Elliot. Hath afflicted me.* — The Jewish writers generally think that they did wrong in leaving their own country to go and live among idolaters. Observing that the law of the old covenant contained promises of unfailing subsistence to those who trusted in God, it is held that it had been the more faithful part for them to have remained, trusting to the Lord for their sustentation. They found death in the land of their choice, which the Jewish writers believe to have befallen them as a judgment. — *Kitto*.

22. *Which returned out of the country of Moab.* — This was the description by which Ruth was commonly designated by the people of Bethlehem, as appears from 2 : 6, where the identical phrase, *the Moabites who returned with Naomi from the country (field) of Moab*, recurs. The constant recollection on the part of the simple villagers that Ruth was a foreigner, the general admiration which her fidelity to her husband's relations had conciliated, and the interest in the sorrows of Naomi which never died among the primitive people of Bethlehem, are vividly depicted in this phrase which we have, as it were, yet warm from the lips of Ruth's contemporaries. — *Cook. In the beginning of barley harvest.* — This was in the beginning of *spring*, for the barley harvest began immediately after the Passover : and that feast was held the 15th of the month *Nisan*, which corresponds nearly with our *March*. The *Targum* says, "They came to Bethlehem on that day in which the children of Israel began to mow the sheaf of barley which was to be waved before the Lord." This circumstance is the more distinctly marked, because of Ruth's *gleaning*, mentioned in the succeeding chapter. — *Clarke*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — The story told in the book of Ruth is admittedly one of the most beautiful to be found in the Bible,

or, indeed, anywhere in literature. It is a narrative which concerns common people and ordinary events, and in which a heathen woman is held up to all time as an example worthy of being followed, yet its simplicity, sweetness, and pathos; its pictures of kindness, affection, industry, faith, and humility charm every reader. The book forms a supplement to the book of Judges, and an introduction to those of Samuel. In these we have no account of David's ancestry; this omission is supplied by the story of Ruth. Its author is unknown. It is generally supposed, however, to have been written by Samuel. It certainly was not written until many years after the events which it records had happened. The writer looks back on "the days when the judges ruled," and reference is made to customs common in Ruth's days, which had become antiquated at the time of writing (chap. 4: 7). As David's name is mentioned, the probability is that Samuel wrote the book in the early part of that king's reign. Beyond the general fact that it was in the troubled days "when the judges ruled," we are not able with any certainty to locate the period when the events of the narrative transpired. As "there was a famine in the land" at the time when the story opens, it has been supposed by many that the incidents belonged to the time of Gideon, who was called to be judge when "Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites" (Judges 6).

The simple and beautiful story may be repeated in a few words. Driven from his home in Bethlehem-Judah by sore famine, Elimelech, with his wife Naomi, and their two sons, Chilion and Mahlon, went forth to seek a living across the Jordan in the land of Moab. Here Elimelech died, and his two sons married two Moabitish women, Orpah and Ruth. After ten years his sons also died, and three widows sat in one household, each having her own sorrow and being also bound by the bonds of the dead to the sorrows of the others. Naomi's bereaved heart turned back to her fatherland. Hearing that the famine had ceased in Israel, she determined to return to Bethlehem. Both Orpah and Ruth said to her, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people"; but Naomi, thinking of their comfort and not her own, refused their company. Orpah then "kissed her mother-in-law" and went back, but no entreaties could induce Ruth to remain behind. "So they two went until they came to Bethlehem," arriving there at the beginning of the barley harvest. Living at Bethlehem was a wealthy kinsman of Elimelech named Boaz, into whose fields Naomi sent Ruth to glean. The appearance of the beautiful stranger attracted the attention of Boaz, and he permitted her not only to glean in his fields, but to share with his laborers their provisions. By the advice of Naomi, Ruth now claimed kinship with Boaz, and he was not slow to acknowledge it. A nearer kinsman, however, was first asked to discharge the duties of kinship, to redeem the land which had belonged to Elimelech, and take Ruth in marriage; but he declined, and then Boaz redeemed the land, and married Ruth. From this union his inheritance was magnified

above that of all his brethren, for he became the father of Obed, the grandfather of David, and the ancestor of great David's greater Son — that child who, centuries later, was born in Bethlehem, as the Saviour and Redeemer of all the world. The events of our lesson are among the most interesting and suggestive of the narrative.

Lesson Topics.—I. Ruth's Resolve. II. Naomi's Return.

I. RUTH'S RESOLVE (vs. 14-18). Word had come to Moab from Bethlehem that once more "the Lord hath visited his people in giving them bread." This form of expression is significant. People in those days believed in God and his perpetual working in the world. Divine Providence was distinctly recognized. If the golden grain beautified and enriched the fields, they gratefully exclaimed, "Behold, this is from God." If disaster and famine arose they mourned, saying, "God hath shut his bountiful hand, for we have sinned against him." In this they were not wrong. God is the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift (James 1:17). Naomi having heard the good news from her own country, prepares to return, and Orpah and Ruth determine to accompany her, and so obey the impulses of a sincere and tender affection.

1. *The scene on the road.* The conversation between Naomi and the widows of her sons, in which she urges them to return, and they persist in proceeding, furnishes a beautiful picture of disinterested affection worthily bestowed, both on the part of the mother and the daughters. The unselfishness of Naomi is grand. She knows that the presence of Orpah and Ruth will be a source of intense comfort to her in her solitary condition; but her sense of justice and love toward these young and affectionate women will not allow her to reap even such comfort at their cost. Genuine affection will never draw others into trouble for its own comfort. Bear the burden bravely alone if it be possible, and do not load another, though he plead with generous sympathy to share the load. With thoughts like these, Naomi stops in the road, and strongly urges her companions to go back. She has nothing to give them at parting but her blessing, and that with exquisite tenderness and deep meaning she now gives them (v.8). This renewed proof of affection only binds her daughters to her more firmly. They cannot part thus; both declare with one voice, "We will return with thee unto thy people." What can Naomi do? Her heart yearns to have them go with her, but justice to their future interests will not permit this. She therefore urges the reason at which she had hinted in her first word of dissuasion (vs. 11-13). To our ears this reasoning sounds strange, but it is founded on the law of Moses, that if a man die, leaving a wife but no children, his brother or nearest kinsman shall marry the widow, and their first-born son "shall succeed in the name of the brother that is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel." No family was to become extinct. Had, therefore, Naomi other sons, it would have been

their duty to take Orpah and Ruth for wives. But there were none, and could be none, and even if Naomi should marry again and have sons, it was not to be expected that these two young women should wait twenty years and refuse all other offers. These facts Naomi puts honestly before them both. There was no prospect of domestic happiness for them in Judah; it would be all sacrifice and no comfort. As she closes her expostulations, Naomi becomes almost despairing in her sorrow. "For it grieveth me much, for your sake, that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me." Her great lament is that they share with her in the consequences. It is a fine nature this woman has; she could endure anything for herself if her friends escaped. That is a quality of true womanhood the world over. Nothing could be more natural than the effect produced by Naomi's words.

2. *The final decision.* The test applied to Orpah and Ruth was a severe one; the outlook towards Bethlehem was very gloomy, while behind in Moab there is hope. If they hesitate, we shall not wonder. The heart that declines prospective comfort to fulfil present duty is a brave and noble heart. The result is given in a few words of matchless simplicity and beauty, "Orpah kissed her mother-in-law," and went back. Let us not feel hardly toward her. She does only what she is passionately entreated to do; she weeps sadly, and takes her farewell with a kiss, loth to part. She loved Naomi, but she simply had not the courage to endure all that discomfort and loss which Naomi's words so vividly picture. She was evidently a woman given to generous impulses of feeling, but without strength of character to sustain her in them. The contrast in Ruth's conduct is complete. "But Ruth clave unto her" — Orpah's example, and further entreaties from her mother-in-law have no effect upon her determination. She is prepared for all that is involved — for poverty, for long widowhood, for exile from home and country, for all, in short, that shall follow faithfulness to her mother-in-law. Comfort was not the main consideration in life with her. She announces her resolve in words most eloquent and tender (vs. 16, 17). This is no empty vaunt; sincerity rings in every syllable of it. The urgency of Naomi's loving pleading has evidently become painful to Ruth, and her feelings find expression in this most eloquent, most musical, and most pathetic of all appeals. A generous nature undoubtedly suffers at every attempt to baffle its loving designs. To refuse the offer of service from a friend is to inflict upon him a cruel wound. It is the highest joy of some men and women to sacrifice themselves on behalf of others, and we should be careful not to hinder their joy, since "it is more blessed to give than to receive." So Ruth earnestly pleads with her mother-in-law, "Entreat me not to leave thee," and announces her resolve in these final terms.

II. NAOMI'S RETURN (vs. 19-22). Ruth's decisive words produced the desired effect upon Naomi. "When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking to her." Her constancy could not be shaken, and the mother-in-

law acted wisely. She was the elder, yet she yielded. There is a time when to yield is a supreme duty. "So they two went until they came to Bethlehem." Nothing could well be more touching than the account of Naomi's return to her old home. The city was thrown into a state of excitement. It is ten years since she left, but she is not forgotten. "Is *this* Naomi?"—there is a world of wondering pity in that exclamation. She went away so happy in her husband and her sons, and now she comes back so bereaved, so dispirited, so aged, they can hardly believe it is really Naomi. "Call me not Naomi," meaning *pleasant*, she says; "Call me Mara," meaning *bitter*. It is for her a bitter hour. The wounds are opened afresh. Grief makes her almost fierce. The name she bears sounds to her like an irony and reproach. The chastisement is grievous, but it works out the peaceable fruits of righteousness. God was with Naomi and Ruth to the end.

SEPT. 16, 1883.]

LESSON XII.

[1 SAM. 1: 21-28.]

A PRAYING MOTHER.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."—Verse 28.

TIME.—B. C. 1171. **PLACE.**—Ramah and Shiloh.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

21. And the man Elkanah, offer unto the Lord the yearly and all his house, went up to sacrifice, and his vow.

21. **Elkanah.**—A Kohathite Levite, in the line of Heman, the singer. He was the son of Jeroham, and father of Samuel, the illustrious judge and prophet (1 Chr. 6: 27, 34). All that is known of him is contained in the above notices, and in verses 1, 4, 8, 19, 21, 23, and chap. 2: 11, 20, where we learn that he lived at Ramathaim-Zophim in Mount Ephraim, otherwise called Ramah; that he had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah, but had no children by the former till the birth of Samuel in answer to Hannah's prayer. We learn also that he lived in the time of Eli the high-priest, and of his sons Hophni and Phinehas: that he was a pious man who went up yearly from Ramathaim-Zophim to Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, to worship and sacrifice at the tabernacle there; but it does not appear that he performed any sacred functions as a Levite, a circumstance quite in accordance with the account which ascribes to David the establishment of the priestly and Levitical courses for the temple service. He seems to have been a man of some wealth, from the nature of his yearly sacrifice, which enabled him to give portions out of it to all his family, and from the costly offering of three bullocks made when Samuel was brought to the House of the Lord at Shiloh. After the birth of

22. But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may*

appear before the Lord, and there abide forever.

23. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until

Samuel, Elkanah and Hannah continued to live at Ramah (where Samuel afterwards had his house, chap. 7:17), and had three sons and two daughters. This closes all that we know about Elkanah. — *Wm. Smith.* Went up. — From Ramah to Shiloh. Shiloh is situated thirteen miles north of Ramah. At this place the tabernacle was set up after the Israelites had subdued and driven out the inhabitants of the land (Josh. 18:1), and here the tribes assembled "to worship and to sacrifice," according to the commandment of Deut. 12:5-7; 16:16. Compare also Judges 21:19. — *Terry.* The yearly sacrifice. — Literally, the offering of the days, the annual offering, the offering which every Israelite was obliged and accustomed to present annually. In going up with his whole house, Elkanah did as is commanded in Deut. 12:17, 18. — *Erdman.* The offering of the days is, as it were, the yearly reckoning with the Lord, the presentation of those portions of the property which fall to him in the course of the year. — *Hengstenberg.* His vow. — The singular "his vow" refers to the vow which Elkanah also had made, based on the hearing of Hannah's prayer. — *Erdman*

22. Hannah (*grace, or prayer*). One of the wives of Elkanah, and mother of Samuel; a prophetess of considerable repute, though her claim to that title is based upon one production only, namely, the hymn of thanksgiving for the birth of her son. This hymn is in the highest order of prophetic poetry; its resemblance to that of the Virgin Mary (comp. chap. 2:1-10 with Luke 1:46-55; see also Ps. 113) has been noticed by the commentators; and it is specially remarkable as containing the first designation of the Messiah under that name. — *Wm. Smith.* Until the child be weaned. — Which in some cases was at the age of three years (2 Maccabees 7:27), and so, quite likely, in the case of Samuel. Abide forever. — That is, as long as he shall live. Compare verse 11. — *Terry.* The Levites generally were only required to perform service at the sanctuary from their twenty-fifth to their fiftieth year (Num. 8:24, 25); but Samuel was to be presented to the Lord immediately after his weaning had taken place, and to remain at the sanctuary forever, that is, to belong entirely to the Lord. To this end he was to receive his training at the sanctuary, that at the very earliest waking up of his spiritual susceptibilities he might receive the impressions of the sacred presence of God. — *Keil.*

23. Only the Lord establish his word. — What word Elkanah here refers to is not clear. Some, taking *word* in the sense of *matter or thing*, a meaning which it sometimes has, paraphrase the sentence thus: The Lord carry out and perfect what he has begun in the case of this child. Others suppose that reference is made to some special revelation concerning the mission and destiny of Samuel, which the sacred writers have not recorded. But it is better to understand by *his word*, the benediction of Eli, verse 17 — "the God of Israel grant thee thy petition." Ac-

thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

24. And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord

in Shiloh; and the child *was* young.

25. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

26. And she said, O my lord, *as* thy soul liveth, my lord, I *am* the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord.

27. For this child I prayed;

cording to this view the parents of Samuel regarded the high-priest's prayer as a prophecy—the word of God respecting Hannah's prayer for a child, and her vow to consecrate such child to the divine service.—*Terry*.

24. **Three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine.**—See the law of meat-offerings (Num. 15:1-13). Several ancient versions read, instead of three bullocks, *a bullock three years old*; but this is probably an error, for, according to Num. 15:9, a single bullock required with it but three tenths of an ephah of flour, while Hannah took a whole ephah, enough for three offerings.—*Terry*. **Ephah.**—A measure containing, according to Josephus, a little over eight gallons; but, according to the Rabbiniſts, a little over four gallons.—*Johnson*. **A bottle of wine.**—Their bottles for wine and fluids in general were made out of skins of goats, stripped off without being cut up; the places where the legs were extracted sewed up, as also the lower part, and the top tied.—*Clarke*. The prescribed drink-offering with each bullock was half an hin of wine (Num. 15:10), or about three pints, the *hin* being the sixth part of a *bath*, which was of the same capacity as the *ephah* (Ezek. 45:11).—*Johnson*.

25. **They slew a bullock.**—One of the three mentioned in the preceding verse. The Hebrew is, *the bullock*, that is, the particular one with which the consecration of the child was associated. This mention of one by no means implies that there was only one, or that only one of the three was offered.—*Terry*. **Brought the child to Eli.**—Who was high priest.

26. **As thy soul liveth.**—A strong asseveration in familiar use among the Hebrews (ch. 17:55; 20:3; cf. Gen. 42:15), and employed by Hannah on this occasion to recall to the remembrance of the aged priest an incident of some years before in which she *was* the principal actor.—*J. F. & B.* **Stood.**—For the custom of standing in prayer, comp. Gen. 18:22; 19:27; Dan. 9:20. In time of deeper devotion and emotion a kneeling posture also was adopted (1 Kings 8:54; 2 Chron. 6:13; Ezra 9:5).—*Erdman*. **Here**—somewhat emphatic—**on this spot.** Eli was sitting on his throne, as before, when they brought the child to him (v. 25), and the spot where she was now standing was the very same on which she had offered up her prayer to God (vs. 10-12).—*Cook*.

27. **For this child I prayed.**—If Hannah had repented of her vow, and not presented her son to the tabernacle, Eli could not have challenged

and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him;

28. Therefore also I have

lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.

him; he had only seen her lips stir, not hearing the promise of her heart. It was enough that her own soul knew her vow, and God, which was greater than it. The obligation of a secret vow is no less than if it had ten thousand witnesses. — *Bishop Hall*. **The Lord hath given me my petition.**—The very words of verse 17.—*Cook*. Three things move Hannah's soul deeply and joyfully: (1) the *recollection* of the moment when she stood here and called on God for this son; (2) the contemplation of the *answer* to her prayer, and the granting of the thing asked; (and 3) the *determination* now to restore to the Lord what he had given her in this answer to her prayer. — *Erdman*.

28. **Therefore, also, etc.**—Render, *And I on my part have given him to Jehovah as long as he liveth: because he was one asked for Jehovah*. The exact translation of the Hebrew is doubtful, and the remarkable play upon words in it is lost in translation. But the general sense is clear: "Jehovah gave me the child, and I restore him in accordance with my vow." The word translated *lend* occurs elsewhere only in Ex. 12:36, where it means *give* rather than *lend*. A loan may be reclaimed at the will of the lender. Hannah's surrender of Samuel was complete (see v. 11 and chap. 2:20). — *Kirkpatrick*. **He worshipped the Lord there.**—The reference of *he* is obscure, leaving it doubtful whether Elkanah or Samuel is meant. *They worshipped*, that is, Elkanah and his wife, is the reading of some of the Hebrew MSS., and the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic versions, and is much to be preferred. — *Terry*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction.—Utter anarchy and confusion marked the closing years of the period of the judges. The history closes with the words, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25). The only point of union for the life of the nation was at Shiloh, where the tabernacle was set up, and to which the tribes repaired, especially at the feast of tabernacles, to worship the Lord of Hosts. The opening of this First Book of Samuel finds the civil authority united with the spiritual in Eli, who was both high priest (v. 9) and judge (4:18) in Israel. He ruled forty years, and his administration was, mainly through the wickedness of his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who assisted him in conducting the services of the tabernacle, such as to bring a terrible retribution upon Israel, and a sad desecration on the ark of God.

While Eli ruled in Israel, there lived in "Ramathaim-Zophim of Mount Ephraim," a man named Elkanah. He had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. His bigamy was strange in Israel, and it is a significant sign of the lawlessness of the time that it does not seem to have been wondered at or thought particularly blameworthy. Perhaps the notion prevailed, as with

the Samaritans to this day, that one of his wives being childless, he was permitted marriage with another. Out of this double marriage the history of Samuel starts. Hannah was bitter in spirit and weary in heart at seeing the happy motherhood of Peninnah, and the latter jealous because of her husband's greater love for the childless one, made her own blessing of children a perpetual taunt and irritation to Hannah, till life was torture and home a desolation. The yearly act of worship in which all the family went up to Shiloh, came like an annual climax to Hannah's grief. Peninnah and her children went up, happy in their own prosperity, and made their joy a grief to poor Hannah. "When she went up to the house of the Lord, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat" (v. 7). Elkanah sought to comfort his distressed wife, but in vain. One day, in the annual visit of Elkanah's household to Shiloh, Hannah's heart was sore and heavy, and she went alone up the hill to the tabernacle. Passing by Eli, who sat in the door, she hurried into the tent to weep out her grief before the same veil and under the covering that had heard the prayers of Moses and witnessed the offerings of Aaron. "She was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore" (v. 10). "She continued praying before the Lord" (v. 12), "She spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard" (v. 13). This is the first mention of silent prayer in the Scriptures. Eli evidently knew very little about this prayer of the heart only, or he would not have misunderstood Hannah so grievously (v. 13-16). But there is One who listens not so much for the utterances of the lips as for those of the heart, who hears our inmost thought. He was in Shiloh on that long past day, and he heard what his priest could not hear. He looked down upon the sad Israelitish woman who bowed before his mercy-seat, weeping and almost heart-broken, not for sin, but in a woman's longing for a mother's blessedness, and He responded to her cry. It is significant that the history of the first and in some respects the greatest of the prophets opens with this story of Hannah's grief and her husband's effort at consolation, and the woman's tearful appeal to God. The good Lord does not treat lightly any human hope or grief. He comes to us in our home life. He did not despise this poor Hebrew woman because, childless and sad, she could only weep scalding tears of earthly disappointment when she came to his tabernacle. God's best men and women have been from mother's prayers and vows, and from father's solemn consecration. Hannah's prayer was a vow. She vowed that if God would give her a son she would "give him unto the Lord all the day's of his life." She made her one all-absorbing petition, but it was not for mere possession she asked. What do we pray for? Is it merely for possession, or also for consecration? Let us pray that the more we have of anything the more we may be able to consecrate to God, and pray, too, that we may not have anything without devotion of it to God. God heard Hannah's prayer, and a son was born to her. Thus it came about that

Samuel was "asked of the Lord," as in later days he was known as the "heard of the Lord." The fulfilment of her vow is the subject of our lesson.

Lesson Topics.—I. The Mother at Home. II. The Child Consecrated.

I. THE MOTHER AT HOME (vs. 21-23). Soon after the birth of the child, the time came for the annual visit to Shiloh. The father went up to worship, but the mother remained at home. She would nurse her little one well, she would nurse him for the Lord; and in due time she would take her child up to Shiloh, and there leave him with his God. Therefore she kept home at Ramah, taking her fill of the new love that had come to her. Such a waiting at home was as sacred as the presence of the rest of the household at Shiloh, and God was as solemnly and happily near to her at Ramah as to them at the tabernacle. This home ministry was in Hannah's case equivalent in sanctity to the public worship of God. Thus it may be and will be with every true and Christ-loving heart. Home service rightly performed is God's service. Many a mother becomes discouraged because she fails to grasp this truth. The children keep her at home, and make claims upon her from which God seems to be excluded. Nay, but caring for the children is just as sacred as prayer or praise. It is not singing and praying, studying the Bible and attending the services of God's house that alone can lift the soul to God; the mother may be lifted by her care and toil for her children, and the father, by the transaction of his daily business. When you doubt this just think of Hannah's lonely housekeeping at Ramah, nursing her God-given child while all the household were at Shiloh; nursing him for the Lord, serving her God when she looked into the heaven-kindled light of little Samuel's eyes, and sealed the bond of the covenant by which she held him for the Lord. With Hannah's intention and covenant Elkanah agreed, approving the devotion of the child to God and hoping for God's approval.

II. THE CHILD CONSECRATED (vs. 24-28). There must have been an interval of several years between what now transpired and what has gone before. How many we cannot say precisely; certainly, however, when, at length, Hannah went again to Shiloh, Samuel, though only a child, was yet old enough to know the purpose for which he was taken, and the meaning of his life. He was able to recognize himself as consecrated to the Lord, as a Nazarite separated to Jehovah forever. This knowledge he owed to the careful training of his devout mother, and with this knowledge Hannah now brought her child to Eli, at Shiloh. It would not be easy to exaggerate the importance of home-training. Samuel's home training at Ramah was the foundation of his public service. Here is a duty that is too often neglected. What idea has many a child reared in nominally Christian families of the service of the sanctuary? What idea have they of God their Father, of Christ their Saviour? Parents, consecrate your children to God, and then train them

for God. Teach them to recognize themselves as devoted to God, as intended for his glory by father and mother, and as given up by them to the Saviour's love, from which only their own sin can ever separate them. What blessedness would come into families, what power into churches, what manliness into life, if children were thus taught; and their lives made sweetly reverent from the first dawn of intelligence, as the little ones come to recognize themselves as given of God and given to God. It is fruitless folly to neglect this or to postpone it on the ground of the child's lack of understanding. Train and guide for the coming blossoming time. Hannah trained little Samuel to recognize himself as dedicated to the Lord; and she had not long to wait for the child's ratification of her vow.

Now Hannah has brought her boy to Shiloh to lend him to the Lord. He was to be hers still, though separated from her. She lent him to the Lord, knowing that he would bring them together again where there should be no more pain of parting, not even for the Lord's sake. Samuel "worshipped the Lord there." He ratified his mother's covenant, young and tender though he was. When he was a gray-haired old man he could say to Israel, "I have walked before you from my childhood to this day," and it was this act of worship that began the *willing* consecration of his most noble life. "The child is father of the man," said Wordsworth, and it is true, especially in the realm of the moral and spiritual. Because of this I would plead with even the youngest for an instant loving consecration to Jesus.

SEPT. 23, 1883.]

LESSON XIII.

[1 SAM. 3:1-19.]

THE CHILD SAMUEL.

GOLDEN TEXT—"Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."—Verse 9.

TIME.—B.C. 1160. **PLACE.**—At the Tabernacle in Shiloh.

LESSON-TEXT AND NOTES.

1. And the child Samuel the Lord was precious in those ministered unto the Lord be- days; *there was no open* fore Eli. And the word of vision.

1. **And the child Samuel ministered.**—In such a way as was proper for a child, and in such services as he could perform, such as lighting the lamps (chap. 3:3), and opening the doors of the tabernacle (v. 15). According to Josephus, Samuel was now about twelve years old. **Before Eli.**—Under his oversight and care. **The word of the Lord was precious in those days.**—*Precious, costly*; an epithet applied frequently to very rare and costly stones (2 Sam. 12:30; 1 Kings

2. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli *was* laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, *that* he could not see:

3. And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the

Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down *to sleep*:

4. That the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, *Here am I*.

10:2; 1 Chron. 20:2; Ezek. 27:22). The meaning is that direct revelations from God had become exceedingly rare, and this fact was owing to the lamentable sinfulness of the priesthood and the people. As sinfulness in the individual heart drives away the Holy Spirit, so in the Hebrew nation it drove away the spirit of prophecy. A direct communication from God at such a time would truly be a *precious thing*. Unless we reckon Deborah, who is called a prophetess (Judges 4:4), so far as we know only two prophets had appeared in Israel (see Judges 6:8, and 1 Sam 2:27) during the time of Moses and this call of Samuel. **No open vision.**—Literally, *No divine communication was spread*; that is, published abroad, made known. If, perchance, God revealed himself to pious individuals here and there, he gave them private revelations; but the persons thus honored were not thereby constituted public prophets, nor sent to publish their communications to the people. In the midst of such spiritual darkness Samuel arose as a new luminary in Israel.—*Terry*.

2, 3. **His eyes began to wax dim, etc.**—Compare the very similar description of Isaac (Gen. 27:1). The A. V. has not at all happily employed the conjunctive and disjunctive particles in this sentence represented alike by the Hebrew *vav*. It seems to make the dimness of Eli's eyes the effect of sleep instead of old age. The passage should be rendered thus: "And it came to pass at that time that Eli was sleeping in his place; and his eyes had begun to grow dim; he could not see. And the lamp of God was not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was, and the Lord called Samuel," etc. Eli's old age and dimness of sight is probably mentioned as the reason why Samuel thought Eli had called him. Being a blind and feeble old man, he was likely to do so if he wanted anything, either for himself, or for the service of the temple.—*Cook*. **Ere the lamp of God went out.**—No doubt this indicates *night-time, near the morning*, since the seven-lamped candelabrum in the sanctuary before the curtain, which (Ex. 27:20, 21; 30:7, 8) was furnished with oil every morning and evening, after having burnt throughout the night and consumed its oil, usually, no doubt, got feebler or went out towards morning (comp. Lev. 24:2, 3).—*Erdman*. **In the temple.**—That is, the sanctuary, the tabernacle. The sanctuary itself was so encased with buildings, as to give it the name and appearance of "a house" or "temple."—*Kirkpatrick*. **Where the ark of God was.**—The ark of the covenant is mentioned as the throne of the divine presence from which the call to Samuel preceded.—*Keil*.

4. **The Lord called Samuel.**—In an audible voice, by pronouncing his name. Compare Gen. 22:1; Exod. 3:4.—*Terry*. **Here am I.**—The usual response to a call.—*Gray*.

5. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

6. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son: lie down again.

7. Now Samuel did not yet ~~know~~ the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.

8. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And

he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; For thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child.

9. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10. And the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

11. And the Lord said to

5. **And he ran.** — Note Samuel's alacrity to serve the aged priest, his spiritual father. — *Kirkpatrick*. Unacquainted with the visions of the Almighty, he took that to be only Eli's call which was really the call of God. Such mistakes as these we make oftener than we think of. God calls to us by his word, and we take it to be only the call of the minister, and answer it accordingly; calls to us by his providences, and we look only at the instruments. His voice cries, and it is but here and there a man of wisdom that understands it to be his voice. — *Henry*. **I called thee not.** — At first, no doubt, he thought the call which Samuel had heard was nothing more than a false impression of the youth who had been fast asleep. — *Keil*.

7. **Samuel did not yet know the Lord.** — The first part of this verse is explained by the second. Samuel knew not the Lord in the way of receiving divine communications from him, for, as already stated, such communications were at that time rare. — *Terry*.

8, 9. **Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child.** — The three successive calls addressed to the boy convinced Eli, there being no human person in the chamber, of the divine character of the speaker; and he therefore exhorted the child to give a reverential attention to the message. — *J. F. & B.*

10. **And the Lord came and stood, etc.** — A Personal Presence, not a mere voice, or impression upon Samuel's mind, is thus distinctly indicated (compare Gen. 18; 17, 20, 21, 33, and Judg. 6:14; and Rev. 1:1; 22:16). — *Cook*. The Hebrew is emphatic: *presented himself*. The visible manifestations of Jehovah or the angel of Jehovah in the Old Testament were foreshadowings of the Incarnation. — *Kirkpatrick*.

11. **At which both the ears . . . shall tingle.** — More accurately "*the which whosoever heareth, both his ears shall tingle.*" This expressive phrase occurs again twice (2 Kings 21:12, and Jer: 19:3), of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. — *Cook*. **Shall tingle.** — With horror and alarm. As a loud, sharp, discordant note thrills one's ears with pain, so the bitter tidings of Israel's woe in the judgment about to

Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12. In that day I will perform against Eli all *things* which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

13. For I have told him that

I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

14. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever.

fall on Eli's house would shock all Israel. — *Terry*. The appalling catastrophe thus predicted was the impending defeat of Israel by the Philistines, the death of Eli's sons and Eli himself, the capture of the Ark, and the desolation of the national Sanctuary. — *Kirkpatrick*.

12. All . . . I have spoken. — In the message recorded chap. 2; 27-36. — *Begin . . . make an end.* — That is, commencing and finishing all. I will execute what I have spoken against Eli's house completely — from beginning to end. — *Terry*.

13. For I have told him. — The Hebrew may be translated either (a) *And I have showed him that I do judge his house forever*: or (b) *And I will show him that I do judge his house forever*. If the first rendering is adopted, the words refer to the doom already pronounced by the prophet; if the second, the words are to be taken in connection with the previous verse, to signify that the impending catastrophe would be a sign to Eli that the judgment upon his house was permanent and irreversible. Chap. 2:34. — *Judge.* — That is, punish as in Ezek. 7:3, etc. — *For the iniquity which he knoweth.* — The Vulgate, followed by Luther, renders "for his iniquity because he knew that his sons dealt shamefully:" describing the judgment as inflicted upon Eli for his own sin in neglecting his duty as father (Deut. 21:18), high-priest (Deut. 17:12), and judge, and failing to restrain the misconduct of his sons. But the rendering of the E. V., which makes the iniquity of Eli's sons the ground of judgment, is possible, and agrees better with verse 14. — *Made themselves vile.* — Elsewhere the Hebrew word always means *to curse* or *to blaspheme*, and is here best rendered *made themselves accursed*. *He restrained them not.* — But contented himself with gentle expostulation (2:23) instead of thrusting them out of the sacred office they had so grossly abused. By this weak indulgence he became partaker of their sins. — *Kirkpatrick*.

14. Shall not be purged. — Lit., *shall not cover itself*; shall not make atonement for itself. The sons of Eli had sinned, "with a high hand," against light and warnings, and for such unrepentant presumptuous offenders the law had no atonement. See Num. 15:27-31. — *Kirkpatrick*. The ordinary sins of the priests and people were purged by the appointed sacrifices (Num. 15:25; comp. Heb. 7:27, 9, 13, etc.). But the sin of the sons of Eli could not be so purged. In blessed contrast with this declaration is the assurance in the N. T., "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from ALL sin," 1 John 1:7 (comp. Acts 13:39). — *Cook*,

15. And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord: and Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.

16. Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here *am I*.

17. And he said, What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee

hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide *any* thing from me, of all the things that he said unto thee.

18. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him, and he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.

19. And Samuel grew and

15. Doors of the house.—Originally, when the tabernacle was simply a tent, travelling with the people from place to place, it had only curtains at the entrance to the holy place and court. But when Israel had become possessed of fixed houses in the land of Canaan, and the dwelling-place of God was permanently erected at Shiloh, instead of the tents that were pitched for the priest and Levites, who encamped round about during the journey through the desert, there were erected fixed houses, which were built against or inside the court, and not only served as dwellings for the priests and Levites who were officiating, but were also used for the reception and custody of the gifts that were brought as offerings to the sanctuary. These buildings, in all probability, supplanted the original tent-like enclosure around the court, so that, instead of the curtains at the entrance, there were folding *doors*, which were shut in the evening and opened in the morning.—*Keil*. **Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.**—Partly from awe at the divine word which formed the content of the revelation, partly on account of the dreadful significance it had for Eli, partly by reason of the sorrow of which, in his reverence and filial piety towards Eli, he could not rid himself.—*Erdman*.

17. What is the thing the Lord hath said unto thee?—The word *Lord* is not in the Hebrew. As in v. 9, it is tacitly assumed that the speaker was Jehovah.—*Kirkpatrick*. Observe the *climax* in the words with which, in *three sentences*, Eli demands information from Samuel; it expresses the excitement of Eli's soul. He *asks* for the word of the Lord; he *demand*s an exact and complete statement; he *adjures* Samuel to conceal nothing from him. **God do so to thee and more also, if, etc.**—Is a frequent form of adjuration, which threatens punishment from God, if the request is not complied with, comp. 14 : 44; 20 : 18.—*Erdman*.

18. Every whit.—Heb. : "all the words,"—everything. **It is the Lord.**—*He is Jehovah*. For the depth of meaning involved in this confession see Ex. 34 : 5-7. Eli, with all his faults, was still at heart faithful to God. He submits without a murmur to the divine sentence, leaving himself and his house in the hands of God. But it is the passive resignation of a weak character. Though he *submits* himself patiently to the will of God, he would not rouse himself to *do it*.—*Kirkpatrick*.

19. Let none of his words fall to the ground.—Let none of his prophecies fail of fulfilment, so that it soon became known far and near

the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

that he was a divinely-accredited prophet, and all his sayings surely came to pass. Compare chap. 9 : 6. — *Terry*.

ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

Introduction. — Samuel was left by his parents at Shiloh, in the care of Eli the high priest, to whom he became an assistant in the services of the Lord's house. In striking contrast with the simplicity and innocence of the young child was the conduct of Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, who were priests officiating in the tabernacle. They were wholly unrestrained by their father, and, in the face of the most solemn warnings their wickedness increased as the years went on (2 : 12-36). As in the case of many a boy since, Samuel's separation from home with its shelter and protection plunged him into circumstances of peril. For while he was too young when his mother first left him, to indulge in the forms of evil that were round him in Shiloh, and which were too vile, too mature, too gross for him at that early age to know their real meaning and horror, still there was danger that his reverence for sacred things would be destroyed, his faith in God undermined, and his very life-blood infected by the associations which were forced upon him by his circumstances. He saw the ordinances of God profaned by the priests, and inasmuch as the ancient faith was ceremonial, he was in danger of thinking, sooner or later, that religion was an imposition and its services deceptive. He had before him a frightful example of sensuality in the way in which Eli's sons desecrated social as well as religious life. He was in peril from the priestly rapacity of Hophni and Phinehas. We have only to think for a moment of the power and effects of pernicious example upon the young to realize the peril in which the young Nazarite was placed. His circumstances in this respect were in principle like those of thousands of young people to-day. Away from the shelter of home, they are in the midst of evil influences and temptations to sin. The danger is inevitable; the risk must be taken; young lives have to make their election between Christ and self, purity and defilement, holiness and sin. The result need not be doubtful. Few can be more disadvantageously placed than the child Samuel, who lived in the reach of the vilest contamination, and saw loathsome wickedness committed by men whose name and office were holy unto the Lord. But he lived uncontaminated. His life is an encouragement to every young person in peril. "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men" (2 : 26), even in the midst of such surroundings. You may grow in grace anywhere, even as you may sin anywhere. Whatever help Samuel had from God you may have. We cannot do without this. The strongest of us will be as helpless in the presence of temptation as a child that cannot

yet walk, and will surely fall if we abide in our own strength; while the weakest can stand in any circumstances, and having done all, stand, if by simple trust in God we lay hold of the strength which He supplies. Samuel may have been about twelve years old when the incidents of our lesson occurred.

Lesson Topics.—I. The Night Vision. II. The Morning Duty.

I. THE NIGHT VISION (vs. 1-14). The writer of this book evidently regarded this vision as the resumption on God's part of those close relations with the people of Israel that had for some time ceased, and that were to be reintroduced by Samuel. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision. It is a suggestive fact that this renewal of intercourse between God and the people began by means of a child's voice; the gentle tones charged, it is true, with the doom of Eli's house, of the boy Samuel. There had been a warning by an unknown prophet. His warning was unavailing. The child Samuel was made a messenger more solemn than the unknown man of God. Here we are at what is practically the beginning of "the goodly fellowship of the prophets." Samuel was the first of them, and as such he is spoken of in Scripture.

Samuel's duties in the tabernacle were such simple services as lighting and extinguishing the seven-branched lampstand that at sunset was lighted in the sanctuary, and at sunrise was put out, and opening and closing the doors. In the nighttime the only light that burned in the house of the Lord was this lamp, and when the morning came Samuel opened the doors, and the sunlight gladdened the courts. It was one night, while the lamp was yet lighted, while Eli, feeble and almost blind, was sleeping in the priest's chamber, and Samuel was sleeping in his place, that the Lord spoke once more. Before the morning broke a new day of hope had risen on Israel. God had broken the silence and spoken once more.

"The Lord called Samuel." The child, awakened from sleep, saw nothing as yet, he simply heard his name called, otherwise he would not have gone to Eli. This call was repeated again and again, and three times Samuel ran to the aged priest under the impression that he had called him. It is evident that Eli at first thought that the boy was only troubled with a dream or fancy, such as sleeping children often have. He did not suspect that the voice of God was about to speak so terrible a message to himself by the lips of his little attendant. But when the third time he heard Samuel coming through the tabernacle, and the little subdued voice saying, "Here am I; for thou *didst* call me," then "Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child." Samuel had mistaken the divine call for a human. He had much yet to learn (vs. 7), but that did not prevent the Lord from coming and calling him. The aged priest instructed the mistaken child. Eli taught Samuel to listen to the Lord for himself. He "said unto Samuel, Go, lie down; and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy

servant heareth." This course commends itself to imitation; but as coming from a priest — from a Jewish high priest — it is very wonderful. The priest is the one-appointed means of communion between God and man; this is the root idea of every priestly system, and certainly the Jewish was no exception. It must have seemed strange to Eli that the divine word should come to one who was not a priest, who, also, was only a child. He, however, becomes for the time more like the prophet than the priest. From the persistency of the call he judged that it was the voice of God, and he told the child what to do, and what to say when the Lord again called. Eli put Samuel in communication with God for himself. Such, when regarded as a Christian duty, is God's true work for men, and their best service to one another. Samuel followed Eli's instructions.

"And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel." Here, in addition to the call, there was evidently the manifestation of a presence. This came after the child had been taught that the call was divine, and was thus gradually prepared for the vision. We may be sure that this call and vision of God had a purpose to serve concerning Samuel himself, to prepare him for the work God had for him to do during his long life. Its immediate purpose, however, was the denunciation of the divine judgment against the house of Eli; and the child prophet was charged with an awful message on that subject.

II. THE MORNING DUTY (vs. 15-18). With the morning light, Samuel went about his ordinary simple duties (v. 15). The special revelation of God did not make him forget or disdain the lowly tasks which were set him to do. Here is a glimpse of the real greatness of his nature. He dreaded to tell Eli (v. 15). He avoided the old man lest he should question him. But Eli had concluded that the word of the Lord to Samuel was of moment to himself, for he adjured Samuel very solemnly to tell him what God had said. Thus questioned, the child faithfully discloses all. "And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him." It was a sad scene. Eli, old and nearly blind, listening to the terrible doom from the lips of the child; the oath of God that the iniquity of his house should "not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever." Eli shows well in receiving the word of the Lord from Samuel. "And he said, It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." After centuries of Christian life, you and I cannot get far beyond that. If ever you are inclined to judge him hardly, think of the poor old man's profound and reverent submission, and it will redeem him in your thoughts. He passed away in sorrow; but before he died he had planted the flower of the new life of his people by his wise dealing with Samuel.

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